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Gifted and talented main characters in children's fiction

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Gifted and talented main characters in children's fiction

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare findings about the personal characteristics of gifted and talented children, their families, and their friendships in research studies with the content in children's fiction books with gifted and talented main characters. The research included how realistically the gifted and talented main characters, their families, and their friendships are portrayed in books for children and young adults.

**GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS
IN CHILDREN'S FICTION**

A Research Paper
Presented to the
Faculty of the Library Science Department

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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July 9, 1986

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CHAPTER I

The Introduction

Many concerns and issues in gifted education today are those which have been present in the past. However, the dimension or emphasis is somewhat different and more encompassing. The concept of gifted education has expanded to become international in scope. Research is more active and significant. Adults, parents and educators, are becoming more informed and communicative. Exemplary programs are operating as examples and models. Gifted individuals are gaining acceptance and confidence in being different. Society continues to grow in expectations and knowledge of the potential of gifted persons and value what they have to offer.

"We must recognize society's continuing need for superior contributions by the gifted."¹ Decisions about and solutions of problems dealing with the environment, social issues, or relationships with foreign nations are expected from gifted individuals in their respective fields. Such persons can offer much to the future of society.

The awareness and the recognition of the possible contribution of gifted persons have not always been present in America. The importance of providing an education for and meeting the needs of gifted children was and, in some instances, continues to be slow in developing.

"While not so planned, early education, particularly higher education, provided relatively more for those who were likely to be bright than for

¹T. Ernest Newland, The Gifted in Socioeducational Perspective (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 4.

other children."² In early America, schools were for students preparing for colleges and universities to study the sciences or professions. Often, these students were also from affluent or influential families. Even after the laws of compulsory attendance for all school-age children, a college preparatory curriculum seemed satisfactory for the capable student.

"By the 1930's a unit in the U.S. Office of Education, long headed by Dr. Elise H. Martens, was concerned with the gifted as a subgroup of exceptional children. The International Council for Exceptional Children at that time regarded the gifted as one of its areas of concern."³ Earlier there had been legislation for special education of the physically handicapped and the seriously retarded. Some local school districts had made attempts to provide for gifted students in the early 1900's and again following the concerns stated in the 1930's by Dr. Martens and her group. But it was not until 1957 and Sputnik that legislation at the state level began in earnest. During the 1960's many educational opportunities were provided for gifted students as a part of special education. At the same time, this concept began to change, however. Gifted students and their needs were not seen in the same light as handicapped or retarded students. Thus, legislation and funding did not maintain programs for the gifted. Much of society's attitudes indicated the gifted have the abilities to solve their own problems and be successful.

Currently, there is a growing interest in the recognition and development of a variety of talent. Several organizations and associations have devoted time, research, and money to giftedness including the

²Ibid., p. 31. ³Ibid., p. 32.

National Education Association, the Office of the Gifted and Talented, the computerization of services of the CEC/TAG/ERIC (Council for Exceptional Children/The Association for the Gifted/Educational Resources Informational Center), the organization of the Leadership Training Institute, the interest and parent groups at the state and local level, professional associations such as the National Association for Gifted Children, and teacher-preparation programs. Some state legislation for programs and money has been in evidence.⁴ The development and involvement by such groups will aid in creating attitudes of acceptance and respect on the part of society for contributions and leadership from gifted individuals. The U.S. Office of Education estimates that 5% (2.6 million) of the 52 million elementary and secondary students are gifted and talented.⁵

Identification of these students is dependent upon definitions. The term "gifted" is defined as "endowed with talent" in Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary, 1974. "Talent" is described as "a particular and uncommon aptitude for some special work or activity; mental endowments or capacities or a superior character." "Talented" is "having great ability; gifted." These terms are often used interchangeably.

In 1972, the U.S. Office of Education provided the following definition which is used by many to develop programs:

⁴Joe Khatena, Educational Psychology of the Gifted (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1982), p. 421.

⁵Bernard S. Miller, "Gifted Children and Their Families," in The Gifted Child, the Family, and the Community, eds. Bernard S. Miller and Merle Price (New York: Walker and Company, 1981), p. 6.

"Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by nature of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are the children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contributions to self and society.

"Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas, singly or in combinations:

- 1) general intellectual ability,
- 2) specific academic aptitude,
- 3) leadership ability,
- 4) visual and performing arts,
- 5) creative or productive thinking,
- 6) psychomotor ability."⁶

"Descriptions of giftedness are always based on the social values of the time and culture in which they are given."⁷ "Society's perceptions of the gifted have varied with the ways in which it perceives its needs."⁸

Persons in the field today speak of various interactions when developing definitions. Newland further states, "How the gifted are defined depends upon the interaction of a variety of factors: the extent of humanitarian commitment to giving each individual the opportunity to

⁶Ibid., p. 4-5.

⁷Joan Freeman, Gifted Children. Their Identification and Development in a Social Context (Lancaster, England: MTP Press Limited, 1979), p. 1.

⁸Newland, p. 4.

realize his potential; the general philosophy of the society to which the schools were expected to contribute; the philosophy and practices of educators, presumably reflecting the first two factors; compulsory school attendance laws and their enforcement, reflecting society's perceptions of the needs of its children as well as the relation of school attendance to the labor market; and particularly, the availability of sound procedures by which to assess the potentialities of its embryonic citizens."⁹

Renzulli places definitions along a continuum from conservative to liberal depending on restrictions of behavior or characteristics of individuals.¹⁰ He considers Lewis Terman's definition using measured intellectual ability on one end and Paul Witty's view of performance on the other. Renzulli goes further to develop an operational definition involving the interaction of above average ability, task commitment, and creativity. Such a definition considers both intellectual ability and nonintellectual factors. This interaction is somewhat different than Newland's in that it considers the performance of the individual while Newland refers to the areas of performance and the values placed upon them by society.

These two aspects, one being the individual and the second involving society or culture, create a multi-dimensional approach to giftedness. "No definition of the gifted is adequate if it does not regard the interactive nature of individual excellence and societal needs and requirements."¹¹ It is difficult to separate them or to know which more significantly

⁹Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁰Joseph S. Renzulli, "What Makes Giftedness?" Phi Delta Kappan, (November, 1978), 180-181.

¹¹Khatena, p. 35.

influences the other. "Not only do individuals with outstanding abilities have a right to develop them, but society needs what the gifted might contribute to it."¹²

"Whether or not these persons contribute to the welfare of society or turn to devious applications of their knowledge and new ideas, however, is a question that deals with morality and values."¹³ They are the only ones to determine how they will use their expertise. Feelings about themselves and interactions with others affect the realization of their potential. The development of attitudes should be an important goal of learning for the gifted. T. Ernest Newland discusses three categories of desirable attitudes on the part of gifted persons: "those regarding moral and ethical relationships, those regarding self and social responsibility, and those regarding their cognitive functioning."¹⁴

"Written words have influenced the attitudes, decisions, and behavior of humankind since the beginning of recorded history."¹⁵ Because gifted persons are often early readers and enjoy reading, reading guidance and bibliotherapy have the potential of being significant influences. "It is only in knowing that people are free to improve their own lives. Real life is not without problems, and since literature both reflects and illumines life, it

¹²M. Ann Dirkes, "Only the Gifted Can Do It," Educational Horizons, (Spring, 1981), 142.

¹³Ibid., 138. ¹⁴Newland, p. 174.

¹⁵Sharon Spremann Dreyer, The Bookfinder, vol. 3 (Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service, 1985) p. xiii.

explores the problems of human experience."¹⁶ "Be aware that your bright students are still children and have problems too. In fact, they may have more than the average student because it is hard to be different."¹⁷

"Through well-chosen books, readers may increase their self-knowledge and self-esteem, gain relief from unconscious conflicts, clarify their values, and better understand other people."¹⁸ Children and young people can identify with fictional characters and situations to gain insight into their problems and alternative solutions. The vicarious experience through literature provides the opportunity to explore these alternatives without serious consequences.

Reading guidance and bibliotherapy are similar in that they can be done by many of the same individuals, but are significantly different in the degree of purpose and specificity of solving problems. Reading guidance may involve recommending a good book without the specific intent of offering a solution to a conflict or problem. It also includes the techniques adults use to interest children and young people in reading for enjoyment or information. Such casual reading may have an effect on the reader, however.

Bibliotherapy is described in terms of medical and non-medical types by Eleanor Frances Brown. She designates medical as the "science" of

¹⁶Eileen Tway, ed., Readings Ladders for Human Relations, 6th ed. (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1981) p. 6.

¹⁷Betty Jo Stockton and Marie C. DuChateau, "Working with Gifted and Talented Children," Catholic Library World, (March, 1984), 349.

¹⁸Dreyer, p. xiii.

bibliotherapy and the non-medical types as "art" of bibliotherapy.¹⁹ The first is a technical aspect. The second is a broader definition, giving bibliotherapy "a much wider application to human life ..."²⁰

The necessary elements of bibliotherapy as an art include:

1. "A reader with a mental or physical problem; a sympathetic and unusually perceptive individual with a broad knowledge of human psychology and books.
2. A collection of books varied enough to provide help with most problems likely to be encountered.
3. Establishment of a good rapport between reader and librarian in order that his or her reading advice may be sought and followed."²¹ School library media specialists, teachers, and counselors often have the physical components and expertise to use bibliotherapy with students of all types, including the gifted.

Brown suggests three goals of education, "education for psychological maturity, for life adjustment, and for character development," in which bibliotherapy can be used as developmental or preventative rather than remedial.²² The therapeutic approach is more direct. After the specific problems of gifted students are identified, appropriate books need to be selected to help students solve these problems. "A successful bibliotherapy program requires a meaningful follow-up discussion."²³

¹⁹Eleanor Frances Brown, Bibliotherapy and Its Widening Applications (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1975), p. v.

²⁰Ibid., p. 1. ²¹Ibid., p. 10. ²²Ibid., p. 181.

²³Mary M. Frasier and Carolyn McCannon, "Using Bibliotherapy with Gifted Children," Gifted Child Quarterly, 25 (1981), 82.

Frasier and McCannon suggest that bibliotherapy can be used in a variety of situations such as an entire class, small group, or individually. The interaction following reading is important. "Reading a book, article, pamphlet, or other material is not enough ... it should not be used independently but as an adjunct to other helping relationships."²⁴

The Problem

The purpose of this study was to identify personal characteristics of gifted and talented children, their families, and their friendships found in research studies.

The following specific problem statements were investigated:

1. Are characters who are considered gifted and talented in books for children presented realistically?
2. Are family members and relationships of gifted and talented characters in books for children presented realistically?
3. Are friendships of gifted and talented characters in books for children presented realistically?

The following hypotheses refer to books written for children with gifted and talented main characters.

- H1. The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will be white males.
- H2. The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children exhibit one or more of the following behavioral characteristics.

²⁴Brown, p. 190.

- a. curiosity.
 - b. independence.
 - c. task commitment.
- H3. The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will have at least one gifted and talented parent.
- H4. The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will be either the only child in a family or the oldest child in a family.
- H5. The majority of families with a gifted and talented member exhibit one or more of the following behaviors.
- a. competition among siblings.
 - b. negative feelings about family members.
 - c. inadequate feelings on the part of parents.
- H6. The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will have one or two close friends within the peer group or friends who are older than the peer group.
- H7. The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will have an interested adult mentor from outside the immediate family.

Definitions

Gifted is defined as "having the potential to achieve eminence and/or produce something of lasting social value."²⁵

²⁵Sheila C. Perino and Joseph Perino, Parenting the Gifted, Developing the Promise (New York: R.R. Bowker Co., 1981), p. 193.

Talented is defined as "children with great skill in a specific area, as opposed to general academic ability."²⁶

Gifted and talented children are those identified or observed having distinctive or unique traits, behaviors, or ability which are are not possessed to the same degree or extent by all children.

Families are those identified or observed attributes of the family system, particularly relating to structure, number of siblings, any gifted and talented members and their birth order, and evidence of family members' feelings and relationships.

Friendships of the gifted and talented include the number of friends, the age of friends, and any adult relationships which might be a mentor, teacher, or other interested and encouraging adult.

Books for children are defined in this study as those fiction books for children within the ages of eight and fourteen and largely intended for the intermediate school age child.

Assumptions

Many authors write realistic fiction today dealing with many current issues and problems in a child's life. Gifted and talented children experience many, if not all, of the same problems or issues any child might face. They also experience an uniqueness of their own which needs to be considered.

Gifted and talented children often enjoy reading and read above their grade or age level. It is assumed, therefore, that gifted and talented children will be readers of all types of literature, realistic fiction

²⁶Ibid., p. 196.

included. Authors have an obligation to portray gifted and talented children, their families, their friends and their problems realistically in fiction. Emotional and social needs of children, including gifted and talented, can be better met with the use of characters in fiction with whom they can identify. It is helpful, also, for teachers, parents, siblings, classmates, and friends to read realistic fiction and use it as a source of understanding.

Gifted and talented children can display their giftedness or talents in one or more fields or areas. It is assumed that certain characteristics will be common among these children and their families regardless of the type of giftedness or talent.

With the fairly recent renewed interest in research and programs for the gifted and talented in education and society, in general, it is assumed that recommended books with gifted and talented main characters are available to children and young people.

Limitations

The titles selected for this research study are fiction and have a gifted and talented main character. They were identified by a reviewing source, bibliography, or within the content of an article specifically directed to the subject of the gifted and talented. An effort was made to include a variety of types of abilities or talents represented in the main characters.

The number of books analyzed was limited to fifteen. All titles were recommended for children and young adults and were reviewed positively in at least two sources. The retrospective bibliographies used were The

Bookfinder, Volumes 1, 2, and 3; The Elementary School Library Collection, 15th edition; and Reading Ladders for Human Relations, 6th edition. The current reviewing sources included Booklist, SLJ School Library Journal, and Kirkus Reviews.

CHAPTER II

The Literature Review

The review of literature for this research subject will center on gifted and talented children and how they are portrayed by authors in literature for children. The researcher emphasized the areas of

- (1) Identification, characteristics, and social and emotional needs of gifted and talented individuals.
- (2) Gifted and talented children in family relationships and friendships.
- (3) Use of literature with and for gifted and talented students.

No concerted effort was made by the researcher to concentrate on the gifted and talented student and the various types of educational programs offered in the schools. There is abundant research and opinion on types and organization of educational programs and activities for the school aged child. The use and application of literature can be a vital part of a gifted and talented program; but that is a dimension which this paper will not explore in detail.

Identification

The identification of the gifted and talented can be determined in various ways depending on the purpose, the personnel, and the use of the results. Identification should be a series of steps: screening, identification, and case study. Ideally, it is all the information which can be gathered about an individual. Martinson suggests several ways screening can be accomplished including rating scales of observation by teachers, group testing (which often relies on verbal ability and leaves out

certain groups); nomination by other adults, peers, and parents; student products or performance; and autobiography. Interviews, checklists, specific tests and opinions of experts are also helpful in determining giftedness.²⁷

An IQ of a certain level or the top designated percent of a group of students is often used for identification purposes.²⁸ A mental ability test facilitates the measurement of the potential or intellectual ability which is included in most definitions of gifted and talented individuals. "While teacher observation and nomination are foremost in use, individual intelligence tests and previously demonstrated accomplishment are rated first and second as preferred methods of identification. Creativity tests, while least used, are recommended as often as group achievement tests."²⁹

Most testing measures general ability which contributes to their wide use. Often this identifies those children who take tests well, but overlooks the creative children who may have significant contributions for society. Test scores are not always suitable or appropriate in defining gifted and talented children. Children with giftedness or talent in specific performance areas, particularly, could be missed or neglected.

Renzulli's operational definition of giftedness attempts to modify this and be applicable to all performance areas. His definition states:

"Giftedness consists of an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits – these clusters being above-average

²⁷Ruth A. Martinson, The Identification of the Gifted and Talented (Reston, Virginia: The Council for Exceptional Children, 1975), p. 16.

²⁸Newland, p. 8. ²⁹Martinson, p. 62.

general abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity. Gifted and talented children are those possessing or capable of developing this composite set of traits and applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance. Children who manifest or are capable of developing an interaction among the three clusters require a wide variety of educational opportunities and services that are not ordinarily provided through regular instructional programs."³⁰

Renzulli feels this is an operational definition because it meets the criteria of being developed from the best research available, aids in selecting and developing measurements, and helps give direction to special programs to better meet the needs of gifted students. He provides a listing of general performance areas including mathematics, visual arts, physical sciences, philosophy, social sciences, law, religion, language arts, music, life sciences, and movement arts.³¹ He also lists numerous specific performance areas as cartooning, choreography, film making, landscape architecture, statistics, chemistry, poetry, fashion design, journalism, electronic music, demography, and agriculture research.

The current procedures of identifying gifted and talented individuals do not effectively find such individuals within the disadvantaged groups. "Psychologically, we have characterized the gifted child as one who tends more than other children to interact with his environment, to learn more from fewer instances and repetitions, and to abstract and generalize."³² Identification by self, teachers and other adults, and by standardized testing may omit a potentially gifted disadvantaged child.

³⁰Renzulli, 192. ³¹Ibid., 192. ³²Newland, p. 51.

Newland defines "disadvantaged" as those segments of society who have less nurturing; are usually lower socio-economic groups; maintain their own lifestyles, communication and values; and may be bilingual.³³ Martinson includes the economically deprived, the rural child transplanted to the city, and minority groups in the disadvantaged.³⁴ Gifted and talented students do exist in the population of anti-social youth as well.³⁵

There is controversy in regard to testing these children. They are not familiar with the testing process, the content is not familiar due to their background, communication is involved due to language, attitudes, and values; and yet some maintain that divergent thinking will be evident.³⁶ Many of their abilities are developed through incidental learning which is not taught in the schools nor tested. Often lower expectations of educators of these disadvantaged groups affects the achievement and potential of such children. The Pygmalion Effect, where the teacher expects more of a student and the student performs accordingly, tends not to be exemplified among the disadvantaged. Teachers often view minority

³³Ibid., p. 47. ³⁴Martinson, p. 100.

³⁵Steven Harvey and Kenneth R. Seeley, "An Investigation of the Relationships Among Intellectual and Creative Abilities, Extracurricular Activities, Achievement, and Giftedness in a Delinquent Population," Gifted Child Quarterly, (Spring, 1984), 73.

³⁶Martinson, p. 108.

students in negative terms.³⁷ "The greatest errors occur when group tests only are used for identification."³⁸

Disadvantaged or minority gifted children are capable of operating at higher levels of thought but may exhibit abilities in ways which are not always standard. They may need time in developing lower-level thought processes and need more initial support when exploring new opportunities.³⁹ Testing will not identify many of these students. Gifted children tend to reflect their experiences.⁴⁰ The lack of nurturing, which Newland described in his definition of disadvantaged, will limit the number and kinds of experiences for these children at an early age.

Characteristics

C.W. Taylor presented a paper at two conferences in 1958, one being the Second Minnesota Conference on Gifted Children, stating the need for consideration of "nonintelligence intellectual characteristics" in identifying creative talent. The use of the IQ measurement should not be

³⁷Ursual Thunberg, "The Gifted in Minority Groups," in The Gifted Child, the Family, and the Community, eds. Bernard S. Miller and Merle Price (New York: Walker and Company, 1981), p. 51.

³⁸Martinson, p. 110.

³⁹Mary M. Frasier, "Minority Gifted Children," in The Gifted Child, the Family, and the Community, eds. Bernard S. Miller and Merle Price (New York: Walker and Company, 1981), p. 56.

⁴⁰Ann Weiner, "Our Gifted and Talented: What are Their Needs and What Can We Do?" in The Gifted Child, the Family, and the Community, eds. Bernard S. Miller and Merle Price (New York: Walker and Company, 1981), p. 28.

the only index of the gifted individual.⁴¹ He preceded to identify numerous intellectual and personality characteristics from his research as well as others. The list is long and involved.

Torrance designed a checklist to assist in developing a tool to identify characteristics of creativity. Some of the most prominent characteristics of creative people from the checklist include the following.

- Adventurous, testing limits
- Asking questions about puzzling things, wants to know
- Attempting difficult tasks
- Becoming preoccupied with tasks
- Courageous in convictions
- Curious, searching
- Determined, unflinching
- Feeling/expressing emotions strongly
- Emotionally aware/sensitive
- Energetic, virtuous
- Guessing, hypothesizing
- Independent in judgment
- Independent in thinking
- Industrious, busy
- Liking to work alone
- Never bored, always interested
- Persistent, persevering
- Preferring complex tasks
- Regressing occasionally, may be playful, childlike, etc.
- Remembers well
- Self-assertive
- Self-confident
- Self-starting, initiating
- Self-sufficient
- Sense of beauty
- Sense of humor

⁴¹Khatena, p. 24.

Sincere, earnest
 Striving for distant goals
 Thorough, exhaustive
 Truthful even when it hurts
 Unwilling to accept things on mere say-so
 Visionary, idealistic
 Willing to take risks⁴²

Roger Taylor, a consultant on gifted education, lists characteristics of the gifted child in an outline form. The main headings of his outline are as follows:

Grasps and retains knowledge
 Conveys ideas effectively
 Shows skill in abstract thinking
 Uses wide variety of resources
 Has creative and inventive power
 Exhibits power to work independently
 Assumes and discharges responsibility
 Adjusts easily to new situations
 Has physical competence
 Appreciates social values
 Establishes favorable relationships⁴³

Many of the subheadings of Taylor's outline are synonymous with those of Torrance's list as are characteristics on other available rating sheets and checklists. Martinson includes four fairly comprehensive lists of characteristics of the gifted or creative child with similarities and differences evident among the four. The creative child, intellectually gifted children, learning characteristics of gifted children, and general

⁴²Ibid., p. 26.

⁴³Nancy Polette and Marjorie Hamlin, Exploring Books with Gifted Children (Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1980), pp. 18-20.

characteristics of gifted children are identified in the titles with certain unique characteristics for each list.⁴⁴

In reviewing the titles of articles used in this research project, it is obvious the term "gifted" usually refers to an individual or group of individuals. Examples include "the gifted child," "gifted and talented students," "gifted children," "the ideal child," "minority gifted children," and "creative individuals." To arrive at such terminology, however, most researchers describe characteristics which are often behaviors.

There is much overlap or consistency among these characteristics. It does not always mean that the researcher accepts the concept of the gifted child as a function of innate ability or potential, although many do make this assumption. In a number of the above mentioned articles, references are made to "considerable potential," "the gifted, academically talented," and "superior ability," for instance.

"High intellectual potential – a superior capability to make and work on the basis of abstraction, to grasp and use complex relationships, and to generalize meaningfully – is taken to be the primary ingredient in giftedness."⁴⁵ Gifted individuals also have a wide range of curiosity and more varied and more numerous interests. There is an intense commitment to interests, even though they may change over a period of time. The abilities of using abstractions and relationships contribute to this intensity and variety.

⁴⁴Martinson, pp. 20-26. ⁴⁵Newland, p. 60.

Judy Eby proposes the idea of the "gifted child" being replaced with the concept of "gifted behavior."⁴⁶ She contends that gifted behavior is not limited to a select few, but rather describes the commitment to a task. It is shown when a child uses ability in a creative way to complete a task and it can appear or disappear at any time. Creative behavior is that which makes a product or idea significantly different from the ordinary through original, flexible, and independent behavior. Both concepts emphasize the product or behavior rather than the person or child.

"Intelligence is a degree of adaptability to new learning experiences because of both innate (brain-related) and learned (motivational) capabilities."⁴⁷ Eby feels IQ scores provide an estimate of potential but the behavior traits of a desire to learn, perseverance, and self-concept are significant to gifted or creative behaviors. Such behavior traits can be more easily defined with a possible greater consensus of such a concept.

Several studies were reported in Eby's article which used different populations and found patterns of characteristics, even though researchers used their own terminology. The researcher and the identified traits are as follows:

Terman and Oden -	Persistence, Goal integration, Self-confidence
Roe -	Autonomy
Guilford -	Fluency, Flexibility, Originality
MacKinnon -	Independence
Lucito -	Independence

⁴⁶Judy W. Eby, "Gifted Behavior: A Nonelitist Approach," Educational Leadership, (May, 1981), 32.

⁴⁷Ibid., 36.

Barron -	Inventiveness, Industriousness
Torrance -	Awareness of problem, Gaining information, Search for solutions, Testing hypotheses, Communicating results
Renzulli -	Creativity, Task commitment
Bloom -	Specific commitments, willingness to work ⁴⁸

Newland sees five different kinds of behavior incorporating the many characterizations of the gifted.

1. "Pressing or pushing into the environment - both physically and symbolically
2. Discovering relationships among things experienced
3. Remembering what has been experienced, facilitated undoubtedly by perceiving relationships within which things could be remembered
4. Being motivated (the rewarding effect of discovery)
5. Focusing or concentrating upon a particular line of behavior."⁴⁹

Polette and Hamlin discuss the difference between the intellectually gifted child and those that are academically talented.⁵⁰ They feel many students have academic talent but are not gifted individuals. Characteristics of academically talented students relate to their physical development and learning behaviors. Such characteristics meet a school definition of conformity for high achieving students. According to them, conformity and creativity are on opposite ends of a continuum. "Thus, the creative, gifted individual can only develop his or her gifts to the fullest by *not* conforming, by creating a totally new approach, method, or idea foreign to society at large."⁵¹

Dunn, Bruno, and Gardiner provide characteristics of learning styles of gifted students from seven investigations between 1980 and 1983 of

⁴⁸Ibid., 32. ⁴⁹Newland, p. 18. ⁵⁰Polette, p. 21. ⁵¹Ibid., p. 20.

children with an IQ above 120 which suggest some consistent patterns.

These characteristics include the following.

Extremely independent

Internally controlled and capable of providing their own structure

Self-motivated

Perceptually strong

Prefer learning by themselves rather than with others

Prefer a formal rather than an informal design when
concentrating on new and different material.⁵²

Many of these same characteristics are provided to parents of preschool children through checklists, information in journals and newsletters, or from schools and organizations. Additional behaviors are suggested such as walking and talking early; being above average in height, weight, or endurance; learning to read early; being advanced in interests and games; learning easily; and having a longer attention span.⁵³

Perino and Perino provide identifying behaviors of gifted and talented children for parents. The learning style of preschool children is characteristic of being alert and observant. They have an advanced vocabulary, use complex phrases and sentences early, and have good organization of language. They are flexible thinkers and avid collectors. They are sensitive, aware of individuals, and have an intensity of feeling.⁵⁴

⁵²Rita Dunn, Angelo Bruno, and Barbara Gardiner, "Put a Cap on Your Gifted Program," Gifted Child Quarterly, (Spring, 1984), 70.

⁵³Willard Abraham, "Recognizing the Gifted Child," in The Gifted Child, the Family, and the Community, eds. Bernard S. Miller and Merle Price (New York: Walker and Company, 1981), p. 24-26.

⁵⁴Perino, p. 23-30.

"No group is homogeneous, and no generalization across group lines is valid."⁵⁵ Most characteristics of giftedness relate to a group of persons, which tend to describe an average. Therefore, all individuals will not necessarily meet all characteristics, nor in the same degree or measurement.

A study of cluster analysis of 81 gifted and talented elementary school students on three measures, the Learning Style Inventory (LSI), the Talent Characteristics Instrument (TCI), and the Creative Personality Traits Instrument (CPTI) done by Perrone, Chan, and Pribyl indicates gifted and talented students are less homogeneous than frequently perceived by educators and counselors.⁵⁶ This study examined the variability on measures of motivation, creativity, social awareness, social skills and preferred learning activities among students with high measured cognitive ability.

No patterns regarding talent characteristics and preferred teaching styles among the population of students were determined in this study as a result of the statistical analysis using the clustering technique. However, in a previous similar study by Perrone and Chan with gifted junior and senior high students discernible clusters of students were revealed. Thus, they "hypothesize that at the elementary school level, when IQ and standardized achievement tests are used as the basic identification criteria, conceptually gifted elementary students are relatively similar on

⁵⁵Martinson, p. 107.

⁵⁶Philip A. Perrone, Fong Chan, and John H. Pribyl, "Differential Characteristics of Gifted and Talented Elementary School Students," Roeper Review, (February, 1985), 190.

levels of self and social understanding (awareness), achievement motivation (task persistency and goal orientation), divergent thinking ability and fail to discriminate as a group among preferred teaching activities."⁵⁷ They indicated their findings of learning styles to be related to the stage of development of the elementary aged student as compared to the older student.

The researchers identified four clusters of differing personality traits, however, which dictated differences in learning needs among these gifted and talented children. The limitations of the instruments used to measure the talent characteristics and preferred teaching styles were also cited.

This study signifies the importance of recognizing the uniqueness of individuals within the group of the gifted and talented. Most efforts are directed to distinguishing the differences between the gifted and talented children and other children. However, "valid generalizations are useful as bases for general expectations . . . Social and educational policy for gifted children and program planning for them have to be decided on in terms of generalizations. Program execution, on the other hand, requires a pervading awareness of the fact that certain youngsters within the group will differ from the generality."⁵⁸

Newland outlines several areas which need consideration of variables for the gifted and talented individual. These include learning potential and academic achievement, socioemotional adjustment, health and physique, learning styles, particular strengths and weaknesses in certain learning areas, and creative capability. There may be interrelation among these

⁵⁷Ibid., 192. ⁵⁸Newland, p. 58.

variables. Research populations to date have not always been representative of the total society. Thus, Newland states a need for further research.

Social and Emotional Needs

Colangelo and Dettmann's review of literature indicates the significance of parents' role in the process of identifying gifted and talented children. They quote Khatena as "declaring that parents are the most potent identifiers of giftedness and creativity."⁵⁹ With the broader concept of giftedness including more categories and the acceptance of more than IQ measures for identification, nonacademic abilities can often be noted more readily by parents.

Another significant role of parents through the family is the social and emotional development and adjustment of their children. "While various schools, organizations, and groups attempt to address the intellectual needs of the gifted, the emotional and social adjustment that comes only from being loved, and from being happily aware of it, must be acquired at home."⁶⁰ "The family is crucial in the social development of children."⁶¹

⁵⁹Nicholas Colangelo and David F. Dettmann, "A Review of Research on Parents and Families of Gifted Children," Exceptional Children, (September, 1983), 23.

⁶⁰Albert D. Sebring, "Parental Factors in the Social and Emotional Adjustment of the Gifted," Roeper Review, (November, 1983), 97.

⁶¹Freeman, p. 37.

Socioemotional characteristics relate to how persons feel about themselves and how they interact with others as a result of their feelings about themselves. Thus, it is important that parent-child interactions be positive in this socialization process. A positive self-esteem is achieved by "the quality of the relationships that exist between the child and those who play a significant role in his life."⁶² The security, love, acceptance, and nurturing in the home affects how the child will develop.

Family Relationships

Gifted children are found in every type of home and community environment. Some family characteristics, however, do allow the discovery or nurture of gifted children more than others. A good home environment is often identified as one without the influences of divorce, low family income, unfavorable community life, and illiterate or poorly educated parents.⁶³ Newland states socioemotional characteristics are greatly influenced by the socioeconomic levels of families and groups in regard to attitudes, opportunities, experiences; rather than by giftedness alone.⁶⁴ Satisfactory family income is a positive influence.

"The most striking and probably the most effectively measured difference between families of different socio-economic groups is in

⁶²Dorothy Corkille Briggs, Your Child's Self-Esteem (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1970), p. 5.

⁶³Roy L. Cox, "Personal, Physical, and Family Traits of Gifted Children," in The Gifted Child, the Family, and the Community, eds. Bernard S. Miller and Merle Price (New York: Walker and Company, 1981), p. 108.

⁶⁴Newland, p. 75.

verbal interaction."⁶⁵ Quality is more important than quantity. Open and direct communication between parent and child as a two-way process is important and makes for better adjustment. Freeman further states that most parents of gifted children have a similar ability level to that of their child, which should facilitate communication and understanding.

"The process of receiving, responding and valuing is a significant part of learning to feel our social responsibilities about things, events and persons."⁶⁶ Children can discover in home discussions the importance of perceiving and accepting differences of viewpoints, opinions, and procedures.

"Over the years, a considerable amount of evidence has accumulated showing that the position in which a child is born into a family affects both her intellect and personality. Most notable, it affects her level of achievement, but almost all the research on effects of birth order has been American."⁶⁷ Freeman discusses several studies regarding the relation between birth order and intelligence. Similar results are the higher the birth order, the higher the intelligence scores. First-borns tend to receive more attention and opportunities and model themselves after their parents. In a study by Lasko, only children are characterized differently than first-borns. They are more dependent, more highly achieving, have a higher level of self-confidence, are more aggressive, are less anxious, and are more obedient to their parents.⁶⁸ In a study by Freeman, parents

⁶⁵ Freeman, p. 66.

⁶⁶ Diane Peterson, "The Heterogeneously Gifted Family," The Gifted Child Quarterly, (Fall, 1977), 403.

⁶⁷ Freeman, p. 41. ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43. ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

designated their children gifted in these proportions: 13% only children and 56% first-born. Her control group, being children of similar ability but not designated gifted, had 52% first-born and only children. The random group had 37% first-born and only children.⁶⁹

Colangelo and Dettmann discuss family characteristics in their review of literature. The size of the family was irrelevant to birth order with three or more children; with fewer, the capable child was the oldest or only child in the family. Gifted children are usually given more freedom in areas of decision making, friendships, and interests outside the home. Middle class parents considered themselves more strict and concerned with achievement, and working class parents were more affectionate in self reports in a study by Hitchfield. Another study reported families with creative children did not have warm or close relationships.⁷⁰

The presence of one, more than one, or all gifted children in a family can create problems with competition, jealousy, and respect of individual differences.⁷¹ The problems may be more numerous and of a greater variety with a larger diversity in children's abilities in a family.⁷²

In a project at the Purdue University, Hackney reports the presence of a gifted child in a family was not always positive regarding feelings and relationships for either the child or the family.⁷³ Ballering and Koch

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 44. ⁷⁰Colangelo, 21. ⁷¹Peterson, 397.

⁷²Sylvia Sunderlin, "Gifted Children and Their Siblings," in The Gifted Child, the Family, and the Community, eds. Bernard S. Miller and Merle Price (New York: Walker and Company, 1981), p. 101.

⁷³Harold Hackney, "The Gifted Child, The Family, and the School," Gifted Child Quarterly, (Spring, 1981), 52.

cited a study by Plouts which found more positive relationships, without competition, between two male siblings when the older scored higher in intelligence than when the younger scored higher or when they were equal in intelligence.⁷⁴

Ballering and Koch also found giftedness-nongiftedness a factor in family relationships. In their study, "nongifted children perceived their relationships with other children in the family more positively than did gifted children."⁷⁵ The relationships between gifted siblings were less positive than those between gifted and nongifted siblings. They also determined the relationships among siblings were more affected than are relationships between parents and children. The father-child relationship was not altered with the gifted-nongifted factor, with the mother-child relationship affected negatively.

Awareness on the part of parents may be a positive factor with difficulties and problems of the gifted and talented child in the family, but it can also create expectations and demands of the child if misunderstandings are present. "Parents may anticipate over-all academic excellence from a child whose giftedness is much more narrow."⁷⁶

Bloom's study reveals the significant role the family, along with teachers and peers, has in the development of the gifted and talented individual. "Most of these children lived in homes where it was important always to do the best that was possible. To do something was to do it

⁷⁴Laurie D. Ballering and Alberta Koch, "Family Relations When a Child is Gifted," Gifted Child Quarterly, (Summer, 1984), 140.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 143. ⁷⁶Sebring, 98.

well."⁷⁷ Bloom terms the gift or quality the child has, which the parent values, a marker. Often the parent has a particular interest or above average ability in the talent area which is encouraged in the child. The family can be very influential and supportive in talent development.

Attention and expectations on the part of the parent or parents center around such markers or, in the case of intelligence, with intellectual activities. Expectations are quite different for boys and girls within a society, and thus within families. Often there are higher expectations for boys than girls with a longer time and more expense involved in education or talent development. "Intellectually gifted and talented females are among the most subordinated, the most underachieving group of people in virtually every society on this planet."⁷⁸ Miller states that in homes, school, and communities where females are given the same opportunities as males, this is changing.

Freeman relates several studies which indicate differences in expectations for boys and girls. Twice as many parents of boys had joined the National Association for Gifted Children as parents of girls according to research done by Freeman. More research has been done with achievement motivation of boys than of girls. The motivational theory developed with the use of males does not work with females according to a study done by Stein and Bailey. Much of the research in motivation of

⁷⁷Benjamin S. Bloom, "The Role of Gifts and Markers in the Development of Talent," Exceptional Children, (April, 1982), 510.

⁷⁸Bernard S. Miller, "Gifted Children and Their Families," in The Gifted Child, the Family, and the Community, eds. Bernard S. Miller and Merle Price (New York: Walker and Company, 1981), p. 12.

girls' achievement was done during the 1960's and 1970's. New research may reveal different findings.⁷⁹

Attention and expectations of parents might have a negative or positive affect on the gifted and talented child and other members of the family. If parents have difficulty communicating and understanding each other's expectations, the gifted child may become manipulative in making demands of them and causing problems in relationships.⁸⁰

Accepting individual differences among the children in a family can be very difficult for parents and siblings. Comparison among family members is very easily done. Giving the gifted child the needed attention may seem to appear as favoritism, with parents overcompensating attention for the other children in the family.⁸¹ Parents, often without realizing it, tend to look at things as the dominate child in the family does and give more attention or support to that child.⁸² This may or may not be the gifted and talented child.

Bloom indicates in his study of talent development, the characteristics of competitiveness and determination to succeed on the part of his subjects began with early socialization in the home.⁸³ This was most evident in families where sibling rivalry was present. Parents mentioned other children in the family were interested in the talent area or had more ability than the child who was achieving or successful, but these siblings were not willing to give the necessary amount of time, energy, or

⁷⁹Freeman, pp. 30-36. ⁸⁰Colangelo, 22. ⁸¹Sebring, 99.

⁸²Sydney Bridges, Problems of the Gifted Child, IQ-150 (New York: Crane, Russak & Company, Inc., 1973), p. 51.

⁸³Bloom, 512.

effort. Usually several years of instruction and comparison of peers and siblings had preceded this drive for competitiveness and determination to succeed.

Families or family members may have other problems or difficulties when gifted and talented children are present in the family. Some parents over-extend themselves and try to help their gifted child too much.⁸⁴ The child may develop guilt feelings if members of the family spend a great deal of time, energy, and money to develop the talent or provide opportunities. An entire family's lifestyle can be affected by the presence of a gifted child. Parents talk about "their fears, guilt, and the heavy sense of responsibility that they feel from having gifted children" in Hackney's study.⁸⁵ Feelings of inadequacy on the part of parents can also be present.

Another reaction Sebring discusses is the fact that some parents refuse to recognize the gifted child in their family. This situation can arise in any family, but often involves the lower income family and one in which there is a greater discrepancy between the intelligence or abilities of the child and the parents.⁸⁶ Such actions and attitudes will certainly affect the child's social and emotional development and adjustment.

The motivation of the parents, as well as the understanding of the gifted child would be influential. Parents may live out fantasies through the child, consider the child a status of success, or use the child as a symbol of prestige to get ahead.⁸⁷ Such motivation might be conscious or unconscious on the part of the parent. Parents may impose their own goals and interests upon the child.

⁸⁴Sebring, 99. ⁸⁵Hackney, 52. ⁸⁶Sebring, 99. ⁸⁷Ibid., 98.

Friendships

Differences between the mental age and the chronological age of gifted children can present problems. Parents may expect more of their children because of intellectual ability or a special talent area when the social and emotional development is not that advanced. These differences can also make it difficult for gifted and talented children to develop relationships with their peers.⁸⁸

Gifted and talented children may not understand and know how to deal with the differences within themselves. In a study done at the University of Alaska, "ego and personality problems concerned nearly 44 percent of the children."⁸⁹ These problems included self-reliance, feelings of belonging, sense of personal freedom, and withdrawal tendencies. Problems in social interrelationships, which included family and school, were designated by 46 percent of the children.

Judy Galbraith lists the following ten common concerns gifted and talented children have about their friends.

1. I have trouble getting them to understand me.
2. It's hard to get along with kids my own age.
3. I hate being labeled "gifted" by kids. It makes me feel too different.
4. I hate being teased about being smart.
5. Kids tease me when I *don't get* A's all the time.
6. Kids tease me when I *get* A's all the time.
7. My friends don't really understand me. Sometimes I feel like I'm way over their heads.
8. I don't like it when somebody gives me the brush off for doing better than they do.

⁸⁸Ibid., 97. ⁸⁹Weiner, p. 29.

9. I have trouble coping with the way peers act.
Sometimes they seem so dumb.
10. It's hard to ignore peer pressure without your
friends thinking you're ignoring them.⁹⁰

This listing of concerns reveals gifted and talented children have difficulty understanding peers different from themselves and vice versa. "The implication for gifted children is that they experience a lot of rejection by their peers."⁹¹ The result is the same whether gifted children lack understanding and reject their peers or other children lack understanding and reject gifted and talented children.

"Terman early set the stage regarding the importance of mental level in pointing out that generally the interests and attitudes of those in his gifted group were more related to mental age than to chronological age, although there were differences within and between gifted youngsters."⁹²

Because of their advanced intellectual abilities, these children often find little in common with children in their age group. Often gifted younger children play and communicate with older average children if given the opportunity. "The major difference between them and mentally average children is that their interests are not only much broader, they are larger in number, and they tend to pursue these interests with more vigor and determination than do many of their less-able peers."⁹³ Thus, many gifted children tend to prefer adult company, especially those with similar interests. Such relationships may prevent them from developing successful social and emotional skills with their own age group.

⁹⁰Judy Galbraith, The Gifted Kids Survival Guide (Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Co., 1983), p. 81.

⁹¹Hackney, 53. ⁹²Newland, p. 100. ⁹³Cox, p. 113.

Children need to develop to potential in social, physical, and emotional development as well as intellectual. Assistance and support need to be considered and provided by families and others. "The one thing all gifted children need is to be with each other at least some of the time during the school day."⁹⁴

"A child is a child first with special abilities or special problems second."⁹⁵ The fact that gifted children have so much in common with other children of their own age and sex is the most significant trait. Khatena speaks of contributory factors and interactive variables as components of nurturing with one being the role parents, the school, and the community play in "preparing and implementing approaches for the cultivation of healthy behavior and growth."⁹⁶ He feels nurturing will become more important with emphasis on the preventative aspects in developing interpersonal skills and social interactions.

Use of Literature

Baskin and Harris report early researchers found books present in the homes of gifted and talented children and evidence that their parents valued books and were positive models.⁹⁷ Swanton, as a public library director, observed the wide use of the public library by parents and gifted preschoolers.⁹⁸ Early experiences with books, being read to by parents or

⁹⁴Miller, p. 21. ⁹⁵Freeman, p. 71. ⁹⁶Khatena, p. 306.

⁹⁷Barbara H. Baskin and Karen H. Harris, Books for the Gifted Child (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1980), p. 35.

⁹⁸Susan L. Swanton, "Minds Alive: What & Why Gifted Students Read for Pleasure," School Library Journal, (March, 1984), 99.

being an early reader, are positive nurturing factors for children. Such parents provide guidance at an early age toward developing attitudes, values, habits, and selection of reading materials.

Once children have learned the process and acquired the skills of reading, they no longer are learning to read but are ready to use reading to learn. When the desire to read, intellectual stimulation, and maturity are present, "books allow a high amount of autonomy for the child in controlling the depth, pacing, direction, ordering, quality, and complexity of intellectual pursuits."⁹⁹ Personal preferences and interests play important factors in selecting books. As was stated earlier, gifted and talented children have definite, intense interests. Books and reading can serve self-fulfillment through enjoyment and challenges met.

"A mistake which has been made in providing materials for gifted readers is to assume that more is better."¹⁰⁰ Even gifted children may need guidance in selection and accessibility of quality literature. Baskin and Harris state books need to be considered for gifted children on "both intrinsic and extrinsic qualities."¹⁰¹ The language, structure, and content are as important as the reaction, in thought or action, which the book creates.

Language, being the most significant, is the means of receiving and expressing ideas, can aid or hinder processing of information, and

⁹⁹Baskin, p. 39.

¹⁰⁰Eliza T. Dresang, "A Newbery Song for Gifted Readers," School Library Journal, (November, 1983), 33.

¹⁰¹Baskin, p. 46.

stimulates creative thought. Literature can serve as a model of language appropriate for gifted children.

"Children need exposure to microcosmic and macrocosmic views; they need books that offer techniques for formulating questions and pursuing answers and for identifying issues of contemporary and continuing concern, and strategies for coping with personal and interpersonal as well as objective problems."¹⁰² Various genres should be used to accomplish these goals. Each has unique characteristics for the gifted reader.

Fiction offers much more than satisfaction to the writer and enjoyment to the reader. Baskin and Harris provide a goal of fiction -- "to explore the myriad perceptions of human needs, desires, and aspirations, examining their incubation, expression, and pursuit in a host of forms. Why people behave as they do, what moves them to base or noble actions, how they and others perceive and interpret the same incidents, and how these beliefs are justified, condemned, or dismissed form the heart and soul of literature."¹⁰³

"Two aspects of the affective domain loom as important to the young gifted reader: the formation of values and the finding of peers who have outstanding abilities."¹⁰⁴ Fiction can serve as a means of facilitating these processes. Nancy Polette states a literature program excels in the areas of the affective domain. "Cognitive and affective learning can not help but be integrated."¹⁰⁵ Young protagonists serve as role models for gifted readers. They can become emotionally involved in exploring and synthesizing problems, feelings, fears, and values.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 50. ¹⁰³Ibid., p. 65. ¹⁰⁴Dresang, 36. ¹⁰⁵Polette, p. 21.

"The world of fiction offers a reasonably safe arena in which they (gifted readers) can explore, discuss, and evaluate the behaviors of gifted characters who may reflect their own interest, problems, ambitions, and concerns."¹⁰⁶ Eileen Tway notes the "unusually gifted child" often has few friends and is considered "different."¹⁰⁷ Tway discusses several examples of gifted children, their relationships with peers, and school experiences found in children's literature. This can not only aid the gifted child, but also assist in better understanding by other children and adults who live and work with gifted children.

The aspect of average children's perceptions and the factors that contributed to their attitudes toward the gifted was the thesis of Virginia Ann Korth's article, "The Gifted in Children's Fiction." She reports on titles of children's fiction with characters "seen by others in the books as being unusually smart and who seemed to use their brains more than the average hero . . ."¹⁰⁸ Korth finds "the gifted to be a very likeable segment of the population of characters in children's fiction."¹⁰⁹

Even primary aged gifted children are able to use reading and books to enhance their growth and development. Brown gives basic principles of instruction from James J. Bigaj and the Milwaukee Public Schools which

¹⁰⁶Jerry D. Flack and Pose Lamb, "Making Use of Gifted Characters in Literature," G/C/T, (Sept./Oct., 1984), 3.

¹⁰⁷Eileen Tway, "The Gifted Child in Literature," Language Arts, (January, 1980), 14.

¹⁰⁸Virginia Ann Korth, "The Gifted in Children's Fiction," The Gifted Child Quarterly, (Summer, 1977), 247.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 258.

provide more interesting and challenging reading for primary students. The same themes are found including capable self-directed learning, guidance in critical and creative reading skills, use of higher thinking skills, quality over quantity, inductive rather deductive, build on diversity of interests, individualize the program, and "instruction should not only assist him in developing information-gathering skills but also in becoming a confident happy individual by enlarging his pleasure in reading."¹¹⁰

"Books are without rival for gifted children, not as a mere substitute for an active engagement with life experiences, but as a means to distill, expand, deepen, recall, and relate to social, biological, and cultural history and as tools to seek knowledge of themselves and to help them understand their future."¹¹¹

Summary

Gifted and talented children, as a group, are unique and have special needs. Yet there are differences among individuals within this group. Researchers and persons in the field have differing opinions and findings regarding definitions and identification procedures.

There are many means of assessment, including checklists to record observations and test measurements. More research is needed for improvement in these instruments as not all gifted and talented children are found, especially within certain abilities, talents, and populations.

Intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and environmental factors are significant in the growth and development of gifted children to reach their potential. Problems arise when there is an imbalance of these.

¹¹⁰Brown, pp. 203-204. ¹¹¹Baskin, pp. 72-73.

The role of parents and family with gifted and talented children is important in this development. Relationships with family members can be positive or negative. The uniqueness of gifted and talented children may also create difficulties with social relationships between them and their peers.

Use of literature through realistic fiction is one way to provide models and assistance to gifted and talented children, their family members, and their peers. If characters and situations are presented realistically, they might be accepted and utilized by the reader contributing to understanding, growth, and development.

Chapter III

Methodolgy

Content analysis was the method of research for this study. Busha and Harter identify content analysis as "a procedure designed to facilitate the objective analysis of the appearance of words, phrases, concepts, themes, characters, or even sentences and paragraphs contained in printed or audiovisual materials."¹¹² "The investigator can move away from subjective opinions based on recollections of individual titles to an objective description of the contents of a systematically selected group of books."¹¹³

Observations are changed into symbols or sets and categorized. These categories can be recorded and measured. The researcher "attempts to increase unit frequency validity" without bias through the collection and quantification of the content analysis.¹¹⁴

The researcher compiled a list of fifteen titles of children's fiction books with a gifted and talented main character to use in this study. Titles selected have a publishing date of 1975 or later.

The study focused on titles appropriate for elementary aged children, eight to twelve years old. Because gifted and talented children often have interests above their age and have advanced reading abilities,

¹¹²Charles H. Busha and Stephen P. Harter, Research Methods in Librarianships (New York: Academic Press, 1980), p. 171.

¹¹³Tekla K. Bekkedal, "Content Analysis of Children's Books," Library Trends, (October, 1973), 110.

¹¹⁴Busha, p. 172.

titles included were recommended for children within the ages of eight and fourteen or are young adult titles appropriate for younger readers. No titles for older teenagers or adults were selected.

Each title selected was listed in a selection bibliography, such as The Bookfinder, The Elementary School Library Collection, The Children's Catalog, or Reading Ladders for Human Relations, or in a journal article, such as "Making Use of Gifted Characters in Literature," or "A Newbery Song for Gifted Readers," and positively reviewed in Booklist or SLJ School Library Journal.¹¹⁵ Titles were available to the researcher from schools or libraries in Ames, Iowa.

The gifted and talented main characters were in the age group of eight to eighteen. They represented the areas of general intellectual ability, visual and performing arts, and psychomotor ability. Two characters of the general intellectual ability, Winston in Fathers's Arcane Daughter and Carrie in The Language of Goldfish, also indicated areas of specific academic aptitude. The areas of leadership ability and creative or productive thinking were not represented in the fifteen books of this study.

¹¹⁵Sharon Spredemann Dreyer, ed., The Bookfinder, 3 vols. (Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service, 1977, 1981, and 1985); Lois Winkel, ed., The Elementary School Library Collection, 15th ed. (Williamsport, PA: Bro-dart Foundation, 1986); Richard H. Isaacson, ed., Children's Catalog, 14th ed. (New York: The H.W. Wilson Co., 1981); Eileen Tway, ed., Readings Ladders for Human Relations, 6th ed. (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1981); Jerry D. Flack and Pose Lamb, "Making Use of Gifted Characters in Literature," G/C/T, (Sept./Oct., 1984); Eliza T. Dresang, "A Newbery Song for Gifted Readers," School Library Journal, (November, 1983)

Each book was read in its entirety by the researcher and analyzed for its portrayal of gifted and talented children, their families, and their friendships. Data was collected and recorded on a checklist with comments and observations noted. The researcher used information from the review of literature to establish the elements and design the checklist. The researcher attempted to increase reliability by clearly defining terms and making categories mutually exclusive.

General intellectual ability: "... an individual who can perform or accomplish cognitive operations at a significantly higher level than expected, given that student's chronological age and experiences."¹¹⁶

Specific academic aptitude: "... an individual who excels in one or more major curricular areas to a significantly greater degree than other areas in that student's curriculum."¹¹⁷

Leadership ability: "... an individual who regularly provides motivation, guidance, direction and assistance in crises situations, primarily to his/her age and social peers, but also to others with whom that child has contact."¹¹⁸

Visual and performing arts: "These students are often extremely talented in areas such as painting, sculpting, drawing, filmmaking, dancing, singing, composing, creative writing, music, and drama. Many are

¹¹⁶John A. Grossi, Model State Policy, Legislation and State Plan Toward the Education of Gifted and Talented Students: A Handbook for State and Local Districts (Reston, Virginia: The Council for Exceptional Children, 1980), p. 22.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 24. ¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 24.

highly motivated, fiercely committed to their art, and show a great deal of creativity and originality in their productions."¹¹⁹

Creative or productive thinking: "... those who can, and often will, develop highly original and/or unusual approaches to solving problems. Their thinking patterns are rather divergent and often significantly different from those of their classmates. They may be characterized as having vivid imaginations, and can elaborate to a great extent upon the development of their original ideas."¹²⁰

Psychomotor ability: "... students with exceptional grace, balance, strength, endurance, and agility ... non-athletes with exceptional psychomotor characteristics, too, and students whose fine motor skills make them exceptional people in the areas of woodworking, drafting, mechanical abilities, etc."¹²¹

Curiosity: "willing to examine the unusual and are highly inquisitive."¹²²

Independence: the quality of being "not affected or influenced in action, opinion, etc. by others"¹²³

¹¹⁹Joseph A. Platow, A Handbook for Identifying the Gifted/Talented (Ventura, CA: Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office, 1984), p. 35.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 19. ¹²¹*Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹²²Corinne P. Clendening and Ruth Ann Davies, Creating Programs for the Gifted (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1980), p. 15.

¹²³"Independence," Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary.

Task commitment: "represents energy brought to bear on a particular problem (task) or specific performance area."¹²⁴

Gifted or talented family members: The presence of the other gifted and talented members includes the mother, the father, any siblings, or other extended family members.

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character: The birth order includes the following place within the family - only child, oldest child, the number of younger siblings and the number of older siblings.

Competition: "Striving to excel in order to obtain an exclusive goal."¹²⁵

Negative feelings: The awareness or impression that is "marked by the absense of or opposition to positive or affirmative qualities."¹²⁶

Inadequate feelings: The awareness or impression that is "not adequate; not equal to that which is required; insufficient."¹²⁷

Number of friends within the peer group of the gifted and talented character: The number of peers who have similar interests and spend time together are included in this category.

Number of friends older than the gifted and talented character: This number indicates any person older than the peer group.

Adult friend who serves as mentor: Any adult outside the immediate family who shows an interest in the gifted and talented character and gives encouragement or assistance is considered an adult mentor.

¹²⁴Renzulli, 182.

¹²⁵"Competition," Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary.

¹²⁶"Negative," Ibid. ¹²⁷"Inadequate," Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

Analysis of the Data

Fifteen fiction books with gifted and talented main characters were analyzed for this study. A checklist noting personal characteristics of gifted and talented children, their families, and their friendships was used as the instrument in analyzing the books. The behavioral characteristics focused on were curiosity, independence, and task commitment. The characteristics of the characters' families included other gifted and talented family members and the birth order of the main characters. Competition among siblings, negative feelings about family members, and inadequate feelings of parents were also indicated. The number of friendships among peers, older friends, and adult mentors were tabulated.

Seven hypotheses were tested in this study. Data were tabulated separately for each. The majority consisted of eight or more of the fifteen gifted and talented main characters. These figures were used to accept or reject the hypotheses.

The first hypothesis was: (1) The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will be white males. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the main characters by sex and race. All six male main characters were determined to be white through the use of illustrations or the lack of specific description indicating otherwise. The same process was used to determine the race of seven of the female main characters. Catherine in A Portrait of Myself was of Italian background. The ninth female character, Arilla in Arilla Sun Down, was a member of an interracial family. More than half of the gifted and talented main characters were female. This hypothesis was rejected.

Researchers indicated where girls were given the same opportunities as males, expectations of them were changing. Authors seem to be realistically portraying these changes by the number of female gifted and talented main characters in books analyzed in this study.

Table 1

Sex and Race of Gifted and Talented Main Characters

Race	Male	Female
White	6	8
Nonwhite	0	1

The next hypothesis was: (2) The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children exhibit one or more of the following behavioral characteristics: a) curiosity, b) independence, c) task commitment. The researcher determined all main characters with the exception of one displayed one or more of these characteristics through their attitudes, conversations, or actions within the content of the books. These characteristics are shown in Table 2. This hypothesis was accepted.

Angeline, Someday Angeline, and Mark, Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder, were both characters with general intellectual ability and displayed curiosity. They enjoyed reading, had special interests, and were inquisitive. Even when Mark had to manage the family garden he turned the task into an interesting project. The other five characters exhibited curiosity about their particular talent areas or their family backgrounds. Arilla in Arilla Sun Down wanted to know more about the American Indian and Black cultures of her ancestors and understand herself better.

The characteristic of independence was indicated in different ways depending on the plot of the book. Six main characters attempted to run away from situations they could not control. Gilly, The Great Gilly Hopkins, and Nicky, Nicky and the Joyous Noise, tried to leave the home

Table 2
Behavioral Characteristics
Of Gifted and Talented Main Characters

Main Character	Curiosity	Independence	Task Commitment
Nicky	X	X	X
Terry		X	X
Arilla	X	X	X
Betsy	X	X	X
Winston	X	X	
Catherine		X	X
Carrie	X	X	X
Gilly		X	X
Monty			
Stacey			X
Angeline	X	X	
Gloria		X	X
Mark	X	X	X
Lloyd		X	X
Kathy			X

environment they were in and return to their mothers. Angeline, Someday Angeline, and Lloyd, Last was Lloyd, ran away from unpleasant school scenes. Mark, Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder, and Kathy, When No One Was Looking, experienced difficult family situations involving parents and siblings. In Soccer Duel, Terry Masters wanted to be independent of his father's reputation. "But Terry did not want to be 'another Masters.' He wanted to be Terry Masters, not 'the son of Alvin Masters.'" ¹²⁸ Betsy in Break a Leg, Betsy Maybel insisted on going home from a party where drugs were being used.

Task commitment within the area of psychomotor abilities for three main characters was the most intense. Terry (soccer) in Soccer Duel, Kathy (tennis) in When No One Was Looking, and Stacey (ballet) in Ballet Magic exhibited drive to win and improve their skills. Gloria in A Summer's Lease had the same intensity in an area of visual and performing arts, writing. "Mama, I'm a genius. I'm going to be a great writer." ¹²⁹ This drive affected her relationships with her family, peers, and her adult mentor.

In summarizing the findings related to the second hypothesis, the characteristics of curiosity, independence, and task commitment were realistically portrayed in fourteen of the fifteen books analyzed. Five main characters had all three characteristics as determined by the researcher, and nine had one or two of them.

¹²⁸Thomas J. Dygard, Soccer Duel (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981), p. 36.

¹²⁹Marilyn Sachs, A Summer's Lease (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979), p.1.

The character, Monty Davis, in Brogg's Brain seemed to be on the threshold of the development of his psychomotor talent of running. At the beginning of the book he said, "I just like to run. I don't see where I have to knock myself out to beat everybody."¹³⁰ The plot shows his realization of what he can do and what he wants to do with his talent. The desire to win and train for himself rather than for others is evident at the end of the book. The reader senses he will have the independence and task commitment characteristic of gifted and talented children. However, the researcher determined the characteristics of curiosity, independence, and task commitment were not evident within this book.

The third hypothesis was: (3) The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will have at least one gifted and talented parent. The researcher required the ability or talent of the parent to be indicated in the content of the book. It was not enough to be rich and famous as Winston's father in Father's Arcane Daughter. Carrie's father in The Language of Goldfish was a prosperous doctor in Chicago and Mark's father in Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder was a successful coach. Assumptions were not made according to profession or occupation alone. Nine main character's parents were not described as being gifted and talented. Table 3 displays the results of the gifted and talented family members. This hypothesis was not accepted.

Four parents where references were made to their giftedness or talent involved psychomotor abilities. The three male characters had the same type of talent as their parents. It was mentioned that Lloyd was a good student in Last was Lloyd, but the plot was about his ability to play

¹³⁰Kin Platt, Brogg's Brain (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1981), p. 9.

baseball. Kathy in When No One Was Looking played tennis and her mother had been a swimmer. Arilla and her mother in Arilla Sun Down and Betsy

Table 3
Talent of Main Characters
and Family Members

Main Character	Talent*	Parent		Sibling	Extended Family**
		Mother	Father		
Nicky	2				X
Terry	3		X		
Arilla	2	X			
Betsy	2		X		
Winston	1			X	
Catherine	2				X
Carrie	1,2				
Gilly	1				
Monty	3		X		
Stacey	3				
Angeline	1				
Gloria	2				
Mark	1				X
Lloyd	3	X			
Kathy	3	X			

*1 = General intellectual ability; 2 = Visual and performing arts; 3 = Psychomotor ability

** Includes grandfather, uncle, or cousin

and her father in Break a Leg, Betsy Maybe! were all talented in different areas of the visual and performing arts.

There would be a majority of main characters with gifted and talented family members if other family members like siblings, grandparents, and cousins were included. According to the books analyzed in this study, authors included gifted and talented family members the majority of the time. However, these family members were not always one of the main character's parents.

Hypothesis four was: (4) The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will be either the only child in a family or the oldest child in a family. The number of children in the families described in the fifteen books included six families of one child, five families of two children, and four families of three children. Nine families had a gifted or talented only child, older child, or oldest child depending on the number of siblings. Table 4 shows the tabulation of the birth order of gifted and talented main characters. This hypothesis was accepted.

Table 4

Birth Order of Gifted and Talented Main Characters

Birth Order and Siblings	Number
Only Child.	6
Oldest Child.	3
Older Siblings.	4
Younger and Older Siblings.	2

The family situations of the six only child main characters represented a variety of family structures. Terry in Soccer Duel lived

with both his mother and father, Angeline in Someday Angeline lived with her father, and Lloyd in Last was Lloyd lived with his mother. Gilly in The Great Gilly Hopkins had lived in foster homes. The other two characters lived with relatives. Winston in Father's Arcane Daughter and Monty in Brogg's Brain each had a younger sister. Kathy in When No One Was Looking had a younger sister and a younger brother. Carrie in The Language of Goldfish and Mark in Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder were the middle of three children in the family. The other four main characters were all the younger or youngest child. In summary, authors are portraying gifted and talented children realistically as the only or oldest child in the family. A variety of family structures is also represented in the books children and young adults are reading.

The fifth hypothesis was: (5) The majority of families with a gifted and talented member exhibit one or more of the following behaviors: a) competition among siblings, b) negative feelings about family members, c) inadequate feelings on the part of parents. According to the data displayed in Table 5, eleven books exhibited behaviors of competition, negative feelings or feelings of inadequacy. Hypothesis 5 was accepted.

Four of the books did not reveal the family scene in great detail. They included Soccer Duel, Break a Leg, Besty Maybel, Brogg's Brain, and Ballet Magic. There were no indications of competition, negative feelings or inadequacy on the part of family members. They emphasized the main characters and the development of their talents.

The cause of the sibling competition within some families was not easily determined. It may have been due to factors other than the giftedness or talent involved. Jack and Arilla in Arilla Sun Down have the typical disagreements of brothers and sisters. Even though Arilla has abilities of her own, she perceives her older brother gifted and that he

would like to see her dead:

Telling you true, a girl never had a more exciting brother to watch, nor a worse enemy to contend with, either, than Jack Sun Run Adams.¹³¹

Table 5
Behaviors of Family Members

Main Character	Sibling Competition	Negative Feelings				Inadequate Feelings		Behavior(s) Present
		Mother	Father	Sibling	Extended	Mother	Father	
Nicky					X	X		2
Terry								0
Arilla	X			X			X	3
Betsy								0
Winston	X	X				X	X	4
Catherine		X	X	X		X		4
Carrie	X	X				X		3
Gilly		X				X		2
Monty								0
Stacey								0
Angeline							X	1
Gloria	X	X		X		X		4
Mark	X		X				X	3
Lloyd						X		1
Kathy	X		X			X	X	4

¹³¹ Virginia Hamilton, Arilla Sun Down (New York: Greenwillow, 1976), p. 31.

In Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder, Mark has conflicts with family members about a safe place to keep his collection of Indian artifacts, for instance. In When No One Was Looking, sibling competition relating to the talent of the main character was a definite contribution to the story development. The entire family schedule revolved around Kathy's tennis. Her sister Jody, who was intellectually gifted, resented the family's devotion and sacrifices for Kathy:

How can I eat this stuff? This meat was frozen in Kansas City seven years ago. And also, when school's in session, they're talking about taking you down to Newport, Rhode Island, every day to this other guy. Mom has to take off more time from the shop, and I have to baby-sit--¹³²

Negative and inadequate feelings were often both indicated or implied in family relationships. Six of the families had both parents present in the home. Two of these families had one parent not understanding or accepting the gifted or talented child. Mark's father in Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder did not share the same viewpoints as Mark and his Uncle Edward whom he referred to as "that old man." An example of his inadequate feelings is evident when he says:

I do my best, Mark Anthony. I do care about you, very much. But most of the time, I just don't understand you. You'll have to talk more to me, and I'll try to listen, or I'll just keep on making this kind of mistake forever. But I do care.¹³³

¹³²Rosemary Wells, When No One Was Looking (New York: The Dial Press, 1980), p. 138.

¹³³Alison Smith, Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978), p. 122.

Kathy's parents in When No One Was Looking represented the attitudes and drive for the possible money and status of a successful career of their daughter. Her mother participated in questionable activities involving an algebra test taken by Kathy, a town election, and scheduling lessons during school time. As her father said, "Well, to be blunt and simple, Kathy, your mother has pulled some strings."¹³⁴ Her father did not agree with these actions which caused conflict with his wife, but was unable to resist them. He also struggled with the family's economic situation.

Six families involved single parents. Catherine's family in A Portrait of Myself experienced much conflict previous to her sixteenth year when the book begins. During the story, she and her mother are living alone. Her father and brother had left home when she was twelve and thirteen, respectively. Her father was an alcoholic and had sexually abused her. There was verbal abuse in the home, as well.

Don't say that, I wanted to cry. I hated my father for those ugly words, that heartless prophecy. But they were the very ones my mother had shouted to him. And so the endless cycle had produced the Vincent he predicted. Where did it begin?¹³⁵

The family members in A Summer's Lease were in conflict for several reasons. Gloria tells of her older brother, Joe, and herself, "My mother fought with him or she fought with me."¹³⁶ Gloria felt her brother, Herby,

¹³⁴Wells, p. 74.

¹³⁵Winifred Madison, A Portrait of Myself (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 66.

¹³⁶Sachs, p. 2.

was favored and argued with her mother about her own abilities and what she would do after high school.

And besides, I'm alot smarter than Herby. Even in math I'm smarter than Herby. I get 95s in everything, and he never got anything higher than 85. I'm not going to work when I graduate. I'm going to college and then I'm going to be a writer.¹³⁷

Her mother also expressed feelings of inadequacy, "I do my best. It's not easy – three kids with my income – but I try."¹³⁸

The inadequacy of the mothers of Nicky, Nicky and the Joyous Noise, and Gilly, The Great Gilly Hopkins, was evident in the fact that they did not wish to have their children with them. Nicky's mother was waiting to get settled before he would join her. Gilly's mother, Courtney, had come "to see for myself how the kid was doing."

Look. I came, didn't I? Don't start pushing me before I'm hardly off the plane. My god, I've been gone thirteen years, and you still think you can tell me what to do.¹³⁹

Conflict in the home during the upbringing of the mothers was implied in both situations. Another example of inadequacy is evident in Lloyd's mother's concern in Last was Lloyd. His mother was fourteen when he was born. "When he was a baby, Mama had told him, Granny and other people

¹³⁷Sachs, pp. 4-5. ¹³⁸Ibid., p. 30.

¹³⁹Katherine Paterson, The Great Gilly Hopkins (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1978), p. 146.

had tried to take him away from her."¹⁴⁰ His mother expressed frustration and worry when Lloyd refused to go to school. "Lloyd, if you miss any more school, they'll take you away from me."¹⁴¹

The single parent in Someday Angeline was Angeline's father. He, too, expressed inadequacy when he confided in a friend, "I don't know how to talk to her."¹⁴² He drove a city garbage truck, but wanted more for his daughter. "I don't want her to be like me. Someday she could be somebody special."¹⁴³

Behaviors dealing with feelings and relationships of family members are evident in books for children and are presented realistically. Authors seem to be aware of sibling competition, negative feelings, and feelings of inadequacy on the part of parents found in research studies when gifted and talented children are present in a family.

Hypothesis six was: (6) The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will have one or two close friends within the peer group or friends who are older than the peer group.

Table 6 reveals that eleven gifted and talented main characters did have one or two close friends from the peer group or an older friend. Betsy in Break a Leg, Betsy Maybe! had three close friends in her drama group.

¹⁴⁰Doris Buchanan Smith, Last Was Lloyd (New York: The Viking Press, 1981), p. 14.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁴²Louis Sachar, Someday Angeline (New York: Avon Books, 1983), p. 49.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 75.

Three main characters had no close friends of any age during the time of the story. Based on these numbers, hypothesis six was accepted.

Table 6

Friendships of Gifted and Talented Main Characters

Main Character	Peer Group			Older			None
	1	2	3	1	2	3	
Nicky	X						
Terry	X						
Arilla							X
Betsy			X				
Winston	X						
Catherine		X		X			
Carrie		X					
Gilly	X						
Monty	X						
Stacey							X
Angeline				X			
Gloria							X
Mark	X						
Lloyd		X					
Kathy	X			X			

Seven main characters each had one close friend. One example was Mark's friend, Earl Jones, in Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder. "He was Mark Anthony's best friend, his only friend, really, at school, and Mark

Anthony had moved to Ridgedale a year ago."¹⁴⁴ They enjoyed some of the same activities and spent time together outside of school. Gilly's relationship with Agnes in The Great Gilly Hopkins was for quite a different reason. Gilly had lived in several foster homes, did not trust others, and did not feel a need for a friendship. But when she had a plan to steal money from an elderly neighbor, she called on Agnes to help.

Agnes arrived immediately, nearly falling over herself with joy that Gilly had not only invited her over but was actually asking for her help in carrying out a secret and obviously illegal plot.¹⁴⁵

Kathy and Julia in When No One Was Looking had been friends since first grade. Classmates had teased Julia about her underwear and her British accent.

Not even knowing Julia's name, Kathy had sat beside her on the school bus and threatened to kill anyone who brought up the subject of underwear or accents again. From that day on Kathy and Julia had been the best of friends . . .¹⁴⁶

Three main characters had two close friends. Kirby in Last was Lloyd wanted to be Lloyd's friend before Lloyd was ready for a friendship.

He looked at Kirby and at the green-and-black spider bike. Here he was, actually sitting and talking with one of his classmates. He smiled, all friendly-like, and smiled at himself smiling.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴Smith, pp. 2-3. ¹⁴⁵Paterson, p. 61. ¹⁴⁶Wells, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷Smith, p. 106.

Then it was Lloyd's turn to convince Ancil to be his friend, which he did. They had both been class outcasts, the last ones chosen for the baseball teams, and experienced some of the same feelings:

"Ancil, I'm trying to be friends with you," he said
echoing Kirby's words again, "but you won't let me."¹⁴⁸

In A Portrait of Myself, Catherine had two friends, Rita and Joanna, in her peer group and one friend, Anthony, a year older. Joanna and Anthony were also her cousins. Joanna and Catherine had spent much time together growing up even though Catherine's mother did not approve. Her mother felt, "All you seem to know is Rita Blomberg and Joanna."¹⁴⁹ Rita's friendship was not an active part of the plot, but was important to Catherine. "Terrific Rita! She had faith in me, actually believed in me more than I could possibly believe in myself."¹⁵⁰ Anthony's relationship was also important to Catherine's discovery of herself.

I'd almost forgotten how good it was to be with Anthony. . .
Each of us wanted for the other to live well, to thrive,
and above all to *be*; we came from the same place, we
understood that place and each other, we cared.¹⁵¹

Eight year old Angeline, Someday Angeline, had been placed in a sixth grade classroom because of her intelligence. This made it difficult for her to develop friendships. However, she met a fifth grade boy on the playground with whom she became good friends. She had this conversation with her father:

"It's kind of tough on her now," said Abel. "All the other kids in her class are a lot older. She doesn't have any friends."

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 115. ¹⁴⁹ Madison, p. 15. ¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 21. ¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 23.

"I do too," Angeline insisted. "I have one friend. Gary Boone. He's my best friend. He's so funny. He knows so many jokes."

"Good," said Abel. "I'm glad you're finally making friends."

"Just one friend," corrected Angeline. "Just Gary. All the other kids are goons."¹⁵²

Stacey in Ballet Magic is an example of one of the characters without any close friend of any age during the story.

Stacey had always been best friends with Pam. But in the past couple of years, Pam had been spending more time with Lynn. The two of them hardly ever paid attention to Stacey anymore.¹⁵³

Friendships were not as important to the story as family relationships or the development of the main character's talent in two other books, Arilla, Sun Down and A Summer's Lease.

The authors focusing on gifted and talented main characters are portraying friendships quite realistically. More often than not, these friendships involve one or two close friends from the peer group or an older friend.

The last hypothesis was: (7) The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will have an interested adult mentor from outside the immediate family. The data analyzed from the books in this study and displayed in Table 7 identifies nine gifted and talented main characters with one mentor and four characters with two mentors. This hypothesis was accepted based on these numbers.

¹⁵²Sachar, p. 29.

¹⁵³Nancy Robison, Ballet Magic (Chicago: Albert Whitman & Co., 1981), p. 7.

The school probation officer, Mr. Duggan, in Last was Lloyd showed understanding and encouragement in helping Lloyd overcome his feelings about not wanting to go to school. The following comment on Mr. Duggan's first visit surprised Lloyd:

Table 7

Mentors of Gifted and Talented Main Characters

Main Character	Teacher, Coach	Extended Family Member	Other*	None
Nicky		X	X	
Terry	X			
Arilla				X
Betsy				X
Winston			X	
Catherine		X		
Carrie	X			
Gilly	X		X	
Monty	X, X			
Stacey	X		X	
Angeline	X			
Gloria	X			
Mark		X		
Lloyd			X	
Kathy	X			

* Includes neighborhood friend, foster parent, school probation officer, interested adult

Oh. I understand. I think we all feel that way sometimes. When someone hurts our feelings, we want to do something to get back at them.¹⁵⁴

There were several other contacts regarding his school absences. These eventually aided him in making friends with Kirby and Ancil.

In A Portrait of Myself and Nicky and the Joyous Noise, the main characters' grandmothers played significant roles in Catherine's and Nicky's acceptance of themselves and the development of their talent. Catherine felt, "It was my grandmother who was helping me, but it was my drawings that made me know."¹⁵⁵ Nicky's grandmother accepted him into her home, had the piano tuned, arranged lessons for him, and gave him encouragement. "Ruby, on the other hand, thought everything and anything he played was wonderful."¹⁵⁶

Uncle Edward moved in with Mark's family in Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder and became a friend and mentor to Mark. He helped Mark and his friend smooth relationships with a neighbor, took Mark's Indian artifacts to the university for evaluation, assisted with the responsibility of the garden, and provided encouragement. "You have my word. Hold on for just a few more years . . . Things will get better. Just hang on."¹⁵⁷

In addition to the mentorship of Stacey's ballet teacher, a neighborhood friend, Mrs. Fremple, provided a different perspective to Stacey's role

¹⁵⁴Smith, p. 55. ¹⁵⁵Madison, p. 232.

¹⁵⁶Mildred Ames, Nicky and the Joyous Noise (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), p. 59.

¹⁵⁷Smith, p. 38.

in the performance of *The Nutcracker*:

Well, you can feel sorry for yourself if you like, but I really don't know why you should. It seems to me you have an important job ahead of you, just to learn the Sugar Plum Fairy part. I'd say you were on your way to becoming a solo performer. If you do well as an understudy, you should stand a good chance of getting the Sugar Plum Fairy part next year.¹⁵⁸

Many different types of adults serve as mentors of gifted and talented children when defined as persons showing an interest and giving encouragement or assistance. Giving support in the areas of social and emotional growth are represented in books children are reading. This support is beneficial to all gifted and talented children regardless of the areas of ability or talent.

Eight main characters in the books analyzed had mentors in the specific area of their talent. These mentors included teachers and coaches. Three of these were outside the school scene and required monetary payment. Carrie in The Language of Goldfish took private art lessons from her art teacher, Stacey in Ballet Magic studied ballet after school, and Kathy in When No One Was Looking had a tennis coach at the club. Carrie's family was the only one of the three which easily had the economic means for her talent. The other five main characters received special support from adults involved in education. Gilly, The Great Gilly Hopkins, and Angeline, Someday Angeline, were elementary-aged students and had interested classroom teachers who recognized and provided for their abilities. A fifth grade teacher in Angeline's school suggested to her

¹⁵⁸Robison, p. 57.

father that she be transferred to her classroom from the sixth grade where she was having difficulties socially. She commented to his concern about being moved back:

Who knows where she'll be next year? Right now, she's smart enough to be in college, yet emotionally, she needs to be with kids her own age. That's the whole problem. She doesn't fit anywhere.¹⁵⁹

Monty in Brogg's Brain had both a coach and a classroom teacher who aided in his development. His coach pushed him to realize his potential :

Now I know your style, and I'm not going to let you backslide, understand? I won't have a quitter on my track team.¹⁶⁰

His English teacher had been a track star and still held a high school record. He helped Monty understand and accept himself by showing an interest and challenging him. Examples of this included:

But you'll never find out how good you are if you keep putting yourself down. That's what's important here. . . Don't kid yourself. Everybody wants to win. I don't care if you win or not, but it's important that *you* care. . . You know, it also takes courage to go all out, to try to do your very best -- and risk losing.¹⁶¹

In summarizing the data relating to mentors of gifted and talented main characters, it appears that authors are portraying these relationships realistically. Mentors, as interested adults, are shown in many gifted and talented areas. Support, encouragement, and assistance are evident in many different types of situations.

¹⁵⁹Sachar, p. 99. ¹⁶⁰Platt, p. 45. ¹⁶¹Ibid., pp. 50-51.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to compare findings about the personal characteristics of gifted and talented children, their families, and their friendships in research studies with the content in children's books with gifted and talented main characters. A sample of 15 children's fiction books with a gifted and talented main character was selected. Each book had been positively reviewed by at least two sources. A checklist was designed to aid in determining if the main characters, their families, and their friendships were realistically presented by authors of children's fiction.

Characteristics and comments were recorded on the checklist for each children's fiction book read in the sample. Analysis was made by tabulating the identified characteristics and noting comments in order to accept or reject the seven hypotheses tested in this study. The following hypotheses were accepted.

H2. The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children exhibit one or more of the following behavioral characteristics: a) curiosity, b) independence, c) task commitment.

H4. The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will be either the only child in a family or the oldest child in a family.

H5. The majority of families with a gifted and talented member will exhibit one or more of the following behaviors: a) competition among siblings, b) negative feelings about family members, c) inadequate feelings on the part of parents.

H6. The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will have one or two close friends within the peer group or friends who are older than the peer group.

H7. The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will have an interested adult mentor from outside the immediate family.

Two hypotheses were not accepted by the content analysis of the 15 books in the sample.

H1. The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will be white males. Nine of the children's books included had female main characters.

H3. The majority of gifted and talented main characters in books for children will have at least one gifted and talented parent. Parents of main characters were not described in sufficient detail for this researcher to determine if either was gifted or talented. The rejection of this hypothesis indicates the data regarding this characteristic were not specific or not included within the content of the book. It does not imply the parents were not gifted or talented.

Conclusions

The content analysis of the children's fiction books read for this study suggests contemporary authors are portraying gifted and talented children, their families and their friendships realistically. It does appear that not all areas of giftedness or talents are represented, however. This researcher found five titles each in the areas of general intellectual ability, visual and performing arts, and psychomotor ability. No titles were represented in the areas of leadership ability and creative or productive thinking as identified in the definition of gifted and talented

children by the U.S. Office of Education. There are, no doubt, children's books with characters of outstanding leadership or creative thinking abilities available to gifted and talented children to emulate. Eliza T. Dresang's discussion of Dacey's Song by Cynthia Voigt in "A Newbery Song for Gifted Readers" supports this concept. It would seem beneficial for individuals involved in reading guidance and bibliotherapy to have these abilities noted in review sources or bibliographies as well as those of general intellectual ability, visual and performing arts, and psychomotor ability. Twelve of the titles analyzed in this study were initially located in The Bookfinder, Reading Ladders for Human Relations, and The Elementary School Library Collection with a gifted and talented area identified. Two titles, The Language of Goldfish and Arilla Sun Down, were found in a journal article and one, Someday Angeline, was discovered in Booklist.

The sex of the gifted and talented main character in children's books does not seem to follow results of research studies. More main characters in this sample were girls. The talent areas of the male characters were represented by two characters with general intellectual ability, one in visual and performing arts, and three with psychomotor ability. There were three girls with general intellectual ability, four in visual and performing arts, and two with psychomotor ability. This shows a fairly even distribution of boys and girls throughout two of the areas of abilities indicated. The ratio of one boy to four girls in the visual and performing arts area might indicate an imbalance within this area. Nicky in Nicky and the Joyous Noise had musical talent. The girls' talent areas included drama, drawing, and writing. Although not a part of the study, it was observed that seven books written by female authors had a female main character, five female authors wrote about a male main character, one

male author wrote about a female main character, and two books written by male authors had a male main character. The sex of authors may have an effect on the sex of the main character in their books.

Authors are true to some of the unique characteristics of gifted and talented children, especially curiosity, independence, and task commitment. The characteristic of curiosity was not as easily determined as the other two. When it was present, it contributed to new interests of the main characters as with Mark in Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder or discovery about themselves as Arilla in Arilla Sun Down. The portrayal of task commitment was a strong point in the books analyzed. Some main characters were committed to improving their talents as Terry in Soccer Duel and Kathy in When No One Was Looking. Their drive to win at soccer and tennis, respectively, was evident. Some main characters, however, were committed to understand themselves and gain acceptance and recognition. Catherine, A Portrait of Myself, and Carrie, The Language of Goldfish, used their talent of drawing in self discovery. Carrie was also intellectually gifted in the area of math. Both of the girls attempted suicide when they didn't find the help they needed. Much of these two books focused on the girls' emotional problems and the progression to solutions which involved their talents. The degrees of independence were displayed from Gilly's unmanageability in The Great Gilly Hopkins to the overprotection of Lloyd in Last was Lloyd. As research studies show, no group is homogeneous. There is uniqueness among gifted and talented children. The characteristics of curiosity, independence, and task commitment seem to be used realistically by authors to depict gifted and talented main characters.

The giftedness of parents was not evident in the majority of the books analyzed. Research studies indicate that most parents have a

similar ability level to that of their children. The majority of those parents described as having a talent in the books of this study had ability in the psychomotor area. This did increase understanding and communication on the part of parents and the children. Much of this attention, however, was in the form of expectations or pressure for achievement or success. The fathers of Monty in Brogg's Brain and Terry in Soccer Duel wanted their sons to measure up to their own past achievements. Kathy's mother in When No One Was Looking had her own goals in mind when she pressured her to succeed. The mothers of Catherine, A Portrait of Myself and Gloria, A Summer's Lease, were not described as being gifted and talented and did not acknowledge or support the talents of their daughters. In fact, they criticized and discouraged them from using or developing their abilities. Such attitudes and behavior were a contributing factor to Catherine's attempted suicide.

Numerous types of family structures were represented in the books analyzed, including both parents in the home, only the mother or only the father in the home, and the child living with neither parent. Several sibling groupings of one, two, or three children were present in the families in the books. The majority of the gifted and talented main characters were portrayed as only children, older, or oldest children. This corresponds with research studies.

No sibling was interested in or demonstrated an ability or talent for that area of ability which the main character possessed. Bloom's studies indicated this could be a factor in sibling competition. Competition between or among siblings was present, but was not specifically described as relating to reasons of giftedness in most of the books. One exception was in the book When No One Was Looking. Kathy and Jody did not share the

same talent, but there was favoritism for Kathy's tennis ability which caused negative feelings and competition.

Negative feelings about other family members and parent's feelings of inadequacy were present in the majority of the families in the books analyzed, but not all were due to the talent of their children. Again in When No One Was Looking, Kathy's parents' disagreements about her tennis career were described. Lack of understanding and acceptance of talent by one of the main character's parents were evident in A Portrait for Myself, A Summer's Lease, Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder, and The Language of Goldfish. Inadequacy on the part of a parent to economically support the talent of his daughter was described in Someday Angeline.

Social relationships were not the center of the story development in the majority of the books in this sample. However, the majority of the main characters did have one or two close friends in their peer group or older who understood them and shared similar interests. Angeline, Someday Angeline, was an example of having an older friend because of her intellectual abilities and lack of successful social skills with her own age group. Gloria, A Summer's Lease, was critical of others and preferred to pursue her own interests to the point of competing with her peers and not having any close friendships. The majority of the main characters recognized their uniqueness. Many preferred to spend time alone with their own interests rather than with peers who did not understand them. Mark in Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder unsuccessfully tried to share his collection with peers. Lloyd, Last was Lloyd, hid his talent from his classmates because they made fun of him. Both Angeline, Someday Angeline, and Mark, Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder, experimented with getting poor grades to gain acceptance with their peers. All of these patterns are found in research studies.

The basic needs of all children seem to be addressed by the authors of the books in this study. The needs for a positive self concept, self confidence, feeling important, being happy, and being cared for and loved are evident in the books. In order for many of the main characters to achieve actualization of this process, the giftedness or talent was recognized and developed. Adult mentors enhanced this process in addition to or in place of members of the immediate family. The majority of the main characters enjoyed being with adults, especially those of similar interests. Mentors represented in these books encouraged, supported, provided skills, and understood the uniqueness of the child or young adult. The majority of the mentors were teachers or coaches. Educators were portrayed as having a significant role in nurturing gifted and talented children in the books of this sample.

Recommendations

With the increased interest in gifted and talented individuals throughout all levels of society, new research findings could be used for similar content analysis of children's fiction focusing on the gifted and talented. Additional studies might include the following:

A researcher could select different children's fiction books and apply the checklist from this study to determine the validity of the content analysis of the books used in this study.

A researcher could design a more specific instrument to facilitate its use as a checklist alleviating the need for comments. This would allow the possibility for more than one participant in the analysis of the books and reduce the subjectivity in a similar study.

A researcher could focus on one aspect of this study: the behavioral characteristics of gifted and talented children, the relationships within a

family including a gifted and talented child, or friendships of gifted and talented children. A more comprehensive analysis instrument could be designed.

A researcher could use different behavioral characteristics of gifted and talented children in a similar study. Researchers have identified many characteristics relating to the group of gifted and talented persons. A researcher could compare different characteristics of the gifted and talented main characters in the books of this study or in another sample of books. The study could focus on the uniqueness of children within the group of the talented and gifted or between gifted and talented children and other children.

A researcher could limit the selection of books to one or more of the areas of demonstrated or potential abilities: general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, leadership ability, visual and performing arts, creative or productive thinking or psychomotor ability.

A researcher could use books intended for a younger or older audience. Books for the primary-aged child and the young adult novel or the adult novel appropriate for young adults would provide additional books for content analysis relating to the gifted and talented main character.

A researcher could use biographies of gifted and talented individuals to analyze and compare with research findings on the gifted and talented. Results of an analysis of personal characteristics and family relationships during the appropriate time period of childhood or young adulthood might be comparable with results of studies of fiction.

A researcher could focus on the education of the gifted and talented comparing situations and practices in children's books with the findings or recommendations in research.

A researcher could determine the use of books with gifted and talented main characters in schools and public libraries for reading guidance or bibliotherapy of gifted and talented children and young adults. Such a study could focus on the needs of gifted and talented children. A questionnaire could be sent to classroom teachers, gifted and talented resource room teachers, counselors, school library media specialists, and public librarians within a specified geographical area.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Titles Analyzed and Review Sources

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The Bookfinder. Volume 3, p. 10.

SLJ School Library Journal, 26 (August 1980), 59.

Kirkus Reviews, 48 (1 August 1980), 979.

2. Dygard, Thomas J. Soccer Duel. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981.

The Bookfinder. Volume 3, p. 179.

SLJ School Library Journal, 28 (September 1981), 123.

3. Hamilton, Virginia. Arilla Sun Down. New York: Greenwillow, 1976.

Booklist, 72 (15 July 1976), 1596.

SLJ School Library Journal, 23 (October 1976), 116.

4. Kingman, Lee. Break a Leg, Betsy Maybe! Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976.

The Bookfinder. Volume 2, Number 382.

Booklist, 73 (15 November 1976), 466.

SLJ School Library Journal, 23 (October 1976), 118.

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SLJ School Library Journal, 23 (September 1976), 134.

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Booklist, 75 (15 March 1979), 1143.
SLJ School Library Journal, 25 (March 1979), 149.

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SLJ School Library Journal, 26 (February 1980), 70.

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Booklist, 78 (1 April 1982), 1022.
SLJ School Library Journal, 28 (April 1982), 75.

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SLJ School Library Journal, 30 (November 1983), 82.

12. Sachs, Marilyn. A Summer's Lease. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1979.

The Bookfinder. Volume 3, p. 323.

Booklist, 75 (1 April 1979), 1220.

SLJ School Library Journal, 25 (May 1979), 36.

13. Smith, Alison. Reserved for Mark Anthony Crowder. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978.

Reading Ladders for Human Relations. 6th ed., p. 115.

SLJ School Library Journal, 25 (December 1978), 57.

Kirkus Reviews, 46 (1 October 1978), 1072.

14. Smith, Doris Buchanan. Last Was Lloyd. New York: The Viking Press, 1981.

The Bookfinder. Volume 3, p. 346.

Booklist, 77 (15 April 1981), 1157.

The Reading Teacher, 35 (February 1982), 623.

15. Wells, Rosemary. When No One Was Looking. New York: The Dial Press, 1980.

The Elementary School Library Collection. 15th ed., p. 491.

SLJ School Library Journal, 27 (October 1980), 159.

Kirkus Reviews, 48 (1 December 1980), 1521.

CHECKLISTS OF TITLES ANALYZED

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Ames, Mildred. Nicky and the Joyous Noise. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Nicky Pratt II Age 11 years

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

☐ General intellectual ability
☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name)

☐ Leadership ability
☒ Visual and performing arts: (name)
musical (piano)

☐ Creative or productive thinking
☐ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☒ Male ☐ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

☒ Curiosity
☒ Independence
☒ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Curious about music, his grandfather, Mr. Estrada's art, and Velveteen's poetry.
 Ran away, initiated the piano tuning, contacted the writer from the art magazine.
 Practiced the piano, helped Mr. Estrada, committed to be good at music.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

COMMENTS:

☐ Mother
☐ Father
☐ Sibling
☒ Extended family members: (name)
grandfather

Grandfather had
musical talent

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

☒ Only
☐ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ Total number of children in family
☒ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3

Behaviors exhibited:

☐ Competition among siblings
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
☐ Mother
☐ Father
☐ Siblings
☒ Extended family members: (name)
grandmother

Grandmother had
negative feelings for
her daughter, Nicky's
mother.

☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of
☒ Mother
☐ Father

Mother always talked of
marrying a rich man and
getting settled before
sending for Nicky.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

 x 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

_____ 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

_____ 1

 x 2

_____ 3

COMMENTS:

Velveteen, a neighbor of the same age, was a friend.

His grandmother was a significant mentor regarding his self development and the development of his talent.

A neighbor, Eduardo Estrada, was a friend that nurtured Nicky.

"Uncle Dave" had interested Nicky in music. He was really one of his mother's boyfriends.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Dygard, Thomas J. Soccer
Duel. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Terry Masters Age Junior/H.S.

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

- ☐ General intellectual ability
- ☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name)

- ☐ Leadership ability
- ☐ Visual and performing arts: (name)

- ☐ Creative or productive thinking
- ☒ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☒ Male ☐ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

- ☐ Curiosity
- ☒ Independence
- ☒ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Decided to be a member of the soccer team after being a successful football player, even after pressure from the coach, other players, and his father. Wanted to be himself, not a son of

Played summer sports, trained for sports, learned new positions, became a good team member. Committed to being a star.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

COMMENTS:

☐ Mother
☒ Father Had been a successful football star
☐ Sibling in high school and college.
☐ Extended family members: (name)

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

☒ Only
☐ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
 Total number of children in family
 ☒ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3

Behaviors exhibited:

☐ Competition among siblings
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☐ Mother
 ☐ Father
 ☐ Siblings
 ☐ Extended family members: (name)

Family relationships were not a major part of plot. Father was disappointed about changing sports, but supported Terry's decision.

☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of
 ☐ Mother
 ☐ Father

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

 X 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

_____ 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

 X 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

COMMENTS:

Hank was a best friend. Same interest, confided in him.

His soccer coach helped him to mature as a person as well
as a soccer player.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Hamilton, Virginia. Arilla Sun
Down. New York: Greenwillow, 1976.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Arilla Adams Age 12 years

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

- ☐ General intellectual ability
- ☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name)

- ☐ Leadership ability
- ☒ Visual and performing arts: (name)
 writing

- ☐ Creative or productive thinking
- ☐ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☐ Male ☒ Female

Race of character: ☐ White ☒ Nonwhite—Black/American Indian

Behavioral characteristics:

- ☒ Curiosity
- ☒ Independence
- ☒ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Curious about James' stories, her father's trunk, and her family's heritage.
Independent in decisions about sledding, skating, and going for her father, not participating in dance.
Committed in intensity of learning and seeking help for Sun Run.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

COMMENTS:

☒ Mother Taught dance.
☐ Father
☐ Sibling
☐ Extended family members: (name)

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

☐ Only
☐ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☒ 1 Brother, Jack, was 16 years old.
 ☐ 2
 Total number of children in family
 ☐ 1
 ☒ 2
 ☐ 3

Behaviors exhibited:

☒ Competition among siblings
☒ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☒ Mother
 ☐ Father
 ☒ Siblings
 ☐ Extended family members: (name)

Arilla's perceptions about her family included:
 Her brother and father were gifted.
 Her mother didn't like her.
 Her brother would like to see her dead.
 She didn't fit in.
 Different cultural aspects entered into family relationships.

☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of

☐ Mother
☒ Father

Father often went off by himself "to release myself." Family members would go after him.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

_____ 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

_____ 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

_____ 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

COMMENTS:

Arilla had no close friends of any age. There were several girls a year older who liked her brother and were dance students of her mother.

Arilla's English teacher acknowledged her talent for writing, but did not serve as a mentor during the book. The search for her own identity was enhanced mostly by her father.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Kingman, Lee. Break a Leg,
Betsy Maybe! Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Elizabeth C. W. Maybe (Betsy) Age 18 years

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

- ☐ General intellectual ability
- ☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name)

- ☐ Leadership ability
- ☒ Visual and performing arts: (name)
 drama

- ☐ Creative or productive thinking
- ☐ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☐ Male ☒ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

- ☒ Curiosity
- ☒ Independence
- ☒ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Explored the drama group. Implied interest in a private school prior to story beginning. Wanted to travel and "explore around" like her father did. Insisted on leaving party where drugs were present. Looked for Harry when trouble was expected. Developed friendship with Nick. Tried to get certain part in play. Pursued getting into school in England.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

COMMENTS:

☐ Mother
☒ Father Had been a world traveler and writer.
☐ Sibling
☐ Extended family members: (name)

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

☒ Only
☐ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Total number of children in family
 ☒ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3

Behaviors exhibited:

☐ Competition among siblings
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☐ Mother
 ☐ Father Her father had been missing and
 ☐ Siblings presumed dead for a long time.
 ☐ Extended family members: (name) Previous to the story,
 _____ her mother and stepfather
 _____ were killed in an automobile
 _____ accident. After attending
 _____ private schools, she had come
 _____ to live with an aunt and uncle.

☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of Betsy's older cousin and
 _____ Mother husband also contributed to
 _____ Father her decision making.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

_____ 1

_____ 2

 x 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

_____ 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

_____ 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

COMMENTS:

Jan, Nick, and Harry were all Betsy's close friends. They were all part of the drama club. Because of her unusual family circumstances, friends played an important part in the development of the story plot.

Betsy's drama teacher was significant in the happenings with all members of the drama club, but was more of a collective relationship. Therefore, she was not viewed as a true mentor to Betsy.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Konigsburg, E. L. Father's
Arcane Daughter. New York: Atheneum, 1976.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Winston Carmichael Age 7th grader

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

- ☒ General intellectual ability
- ☒ Specific academic aptitude: (name) - In retrospect this was
literature/writing acknowledged at the end
of the story.
- ☐ Leadership ability
- ☐ Visual and performing arts: (name)

- ☐ Creative or productive thinking
- ☐ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☒ Male ☐ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

- ☒ Curiosity
- ☒ Independence
- ☐ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Curious about Caroline's identity, an older half sister who had been kidnapped and later returned. Creative in play with a friend. Enjoyed writing imaginative letters. Answered door, never forgot anything for school, wanted to buy Caroline a gift, visited Caroline's apartment alone, took Heidi to Caroline's without permission.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

COMMENTS:

☐ Mother
☐ Father Father was rich and famous, but not described
☒ Sibling as gifted. Heidi, a sister, was tested
☐ Extended family members: (name) and identified as gifted.

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

☐ Only
☒ Oldest
☒ Number of younger siblings
 ☒ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
 Total number of children in family
 ☐ 1
 ☒ 2
 ☐ 3

Behaviors exhibited:

☒ Competition among siblings
☒ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☒ Mother
 ☐ Father
 ☐ Siblings
 ☐ Extended family members: (name)

☒ Inadequate feelings on the part of
 ☒ Mother
 ☒ Father

Heidi was also physically handicapped. There was jealousy present. Winston had to care for her at times. Later, he resented the attention she received because of her intelligence.

Mother was annoyed with Caroline's presence. She overprotected Heidi and prevented her from developing her abilities. She was ashamed of her handicap.

Father did not endorse the needed help for Heidi's rehabilitation. He participated in the misconception of Caroline.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

 X 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

_____ 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

 X 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

COMMENTS:

Barney comes for one visit to Winston's home. It was a disaster due to Heidi. He had no friends over after that. Friendships were not significant to the plot.

Caroline was extremely important to the "freedom" of both Winston and Heidi from the controls of their parents and lifestyle. She was not really a member of the family, but an imposter. Thus, she was considered outside the immediate family, but played the role of a half sister for part of the story.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Madison, Winifred. A Portrait of Myself. New York: Random House, 1979.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Catherine d'Amato Age 16 years

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

- ☐ General intellectual ability
- ☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name)

- ☐ Leadership ability
- ☒ Visual and performing arts: (name)
artistic
- ☐ Creative or productive thinking
- ☐ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☐ Male ☒ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

- ☐ Curiosity
- ☒ Independence
- ☒ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Attempted suicide. Questioned the quality of her drawing not that she wouldn't draw. Felt alone and different. Pursued own interests. Wouldn't wear hand-me-down clothes. Delivered paintings to Karen's house. Completed her drawing projects. Dependable at her job. Resisted Joanna's negative influence.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

COMMENTS:

☐ Mother
☐ Father
☐ Sibling
☒ Extended family members: (name)
cousin, Anthony - musical
cousin, Gloria - artistic
great grandfather - artistic
great uncle - artistic

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

☐ Only
☐ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
☒ 1
☐ 2
☐ Total number of children in family
☐ 1
☒ 2
☐ 3

Member of a close large
 extended family who did
 many things together.
 Her brother, Vincent, had
 left home before story after
 much conflict. Implied
 impatience with Catherine.

Behaviors exhibited:

☐ Competition among siblings (not during this book)
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
☒ Mother
☒ Father
☐ Siblings
☐ Extended family members: (name)

Family relationships were
 not healthy for reasons
 other than giftedness.

☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of

☒ Mother
☒ Father

Father had left home when Catherine
 was 12, was alcoholic, was sexually
 abusive on one occasion to Catherine.
 Mother considered her a difficult child,
 didn't accept or value her ability,
 gave much advice, Catherine did not
 argue back as other family members had.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

_____ 1
 x 2
 _____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

 x 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

 x 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

COMMENTS:

Rita, intellectually bright friend, was significant support to Catherine even though she did not spend a great deal of time with her during this story. Joanna, her cousin, and Catherine spent much time together growing up. Catherine's mother did not approve of Joanna's attitudes and behavior. Catherine evaluated this herself during the happenings in this story.

Anthony, another cousin, was a year older and gifted musically. Catherine enjoyed being with him, as they understood and cared for each other. He gave her hope.

Two teachers contributed to Catherine's development, but not in the sense of mentors. Her art teacher provided instruction through the course of his educational role, but did not offer encouragement and support. He was generally sarcastic to students and did not nurture them. Catherine admired her P.E. teacher. She did not consciously nurture Catherine and the relationship was not positive.

Catherine's grandparents, especially her grandmother, considered Anthony and Catherine special ones and encouraged them a great deal. Her grandmother was determined to be a mentor to Catherine.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Oneal, Zibby. The Language of Goldfish. New York: The Viking Press, 1980.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Carrie Stokes Age 13 years

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

- ☒ General intellectual ability
- ☒ Specific academic aptitude: (name)
math
- ☐ Leadership ability
- ☒ Visual and performing arts: (name)
artistic
- ☐ Creative or productive thinking
- ☐ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☐ Male ☒ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

- ☒ Curiosity
- ☒ Independence
- ☒ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Attempted suicide. Didn't want to give up her childhood or want things to change. Asked for help in many ways, but family kept making excuses and were involved in their own situations. Expressed curiosity in her drawing by showing movement. Discussed paintings at the Art Institute with her art teacher. Struggled for rights to do what she felt important - her hair, dress, and going to dances. Wouldn't cheat on a test for a classmate. Entered art competitions and met deadlines, never missed field hockey practices, and wanted to figure out her illness.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

COMMENTS:

- ☐ Mother
☐ Father
☐ Sibling
☐ Extended family members: (name)

Unknown. Father was a successful medical doctor.

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

- ☐ Only
☐ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
 ☒ 1 brother, Duncan
 _____ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☒ 1
 _____ 2 sister, Moira
 Total number of children in family
 _____ 1
 _____ 2
 ☒ 3

Behaviors exhibited:

- ☒ Competition among siblings
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☒ Mother
 _____ Father
 _____ Siblings
 _____ Extended family members: (name)

- ☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of
 ☒ Mother
 _____ Father

Carrie did not want to do everything that Moira did. Moira thought Carrie should "grow up." She didn't want to deal with her attempted suicide.

Mother favored Moira and compared the girls. She didn't accept Carrie's problems or her appearance. She had trouble understanding art. She was very involved in her own social world.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

_____ 1
 x 2
 _____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

_____ 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

 x 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

COMMENTS:

Tanya had been a friend in her old neighborhood. Carrie had no close friends in her present school until Daniel moved in next door. He was in her advanced math class and had an older brother who was dating Moira. Daniel and Carrie had many of the same feelings about growing up.

Mrs. Ramsay was Carrie's art teacher. She considered her a friend. She went to her home on Saturdays for lessons. At times, they went to the Art Institute together. She was an important person to Carrie.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Paterson, Katherine. *The Great Gilly Hopkins*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1978.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Galadriel Hopkins (Gilly) Age 11 years

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

- ☒ General intellectual ability
- ☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name) _____
- ☐ Leadership ability
- ☐ Visual and performing arts: (name) _____
- ☐ Creative or productive thinking
- ☐ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☐ Male ☒ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

- ☒ Curiosity
- ☒ Independence
- ☒ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Strives to be different from others, belligerent, wants to be on her own, tries to run away, grabbed ball from boys at recess. Persistent in locating and taking money from Mr. Randolph's house, contacting her mother, and caring for her foster family when they were all ill.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

COMMENTS:

☐ Mother
☐ Father
☐ Sibling Unknown.
☐ Extended family members: (name)

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

☒ Only
☐ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
 Total number of children in family
 ☒ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3

She had lived in several foster homes which had provided her with sibling-like relationships. During this story there was a younger boy in the home when she arrived.

Behaviors exhibited:

☐ Competition among siblings
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☒ Mother
 ☐ Father
 ☐ Siblings
 ☐ Extended family members: (name)

Her mother had resented her own upbringing and had left home before Gilly was born and had not returned until the end of the story.

☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of

☒ Mother
☐ Father

Her mother did not want to be bothered by having Gilly around. She sent her superficial letters about her feelings. Gilly learns to understand her mother.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

 X 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

_____ 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

_____ 1

 X 2

_____ 3

COMMENTS:

Gilly was not in one living situation long enough to develop many friendships. Usually she was defensive and reacted negatively. It was determined to consider Agnes a friend because she did confide in her. Her involvement was necessary to obtain the money. Agnes had attempted several times to become Gilly's friend.

The sixth grade teacher was determined to be a mentor because she cared about Gilly, confronted her, and communicated with her after she had moved. It was a positive relationship and affected Gilly's attitudes.

Mrs. Trotter, her foster mother, was a significant person in Gilly's life. She accepted her, defended her, and yet encouraged her to leave when it was necessary.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Platt, Kin. Brogg's Brain.
New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1981.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Monty Davis Age 15 years

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

☐ General intellectual ability
☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name)

☐ Leadership ability
☐ Visual and performing arts: (name)

☐ Creative or productive thinking
☒ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☒ Male ☐ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

☐ Curiosity
☐ Independence
☐ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Monty does not possess the drive and confidence of many gifted and talented individuals. At the end of the book you feel it may be different in the future. He is developing independent thinking and has the desire to succeed.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

COMMENTS:

☐ Mother
☒ Father
☐ Sibling
☐ Extended family members: (name)

Father had talent in the same area of psychomotor ability of running.

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

☐ Only
☒ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
 ☒ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Total number of children in family
 ☐ 1
 ☒ 2
 ☐ 3

Behaviors exhibited:

☐ Competition among siblings
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☐ Mother
 ☐ Father
 ☐ Siblings
 ☐ Extended family members: (name)

The family relationships were not a significant part of the story plot. There seemed to be support between Monty and his sister. They had different interests. One incident told of Monty getting an idea of a report from his sister.

☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of
 ☐ Mother
 ☐ Father

The reader was aware of the father's expectations but this was done through the coach's comments.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

 x 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

_____ 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

_____ 1

 x 2

_____ 3

COMMENTS:

Cindy was also a runner, but a different type. She ran marathons. Her interest and ability inspired and encouragement helped Monty come to grips with his own running ability.

Coach Gordon realized Monty's ability and pushed him to his limits. Monty's father may have had indirect influence in this area.

Mr. Robinson, an English teacher, had been a track star. He showed an interest in Monty, shared personal experiences, and challenged him to have courage to do what he thought best for himself.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Robison, Nancy. Ballet Magic.
Chicago: Albert Whitman & Co., 1981.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Stacey Age 10-12 years

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

- ☐ General intellectual ability
- ☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name)

- ☐ Leadership ability
- ☐ Visual and performing arts: (name)

- ☐ Creative or productive thinking
- ☒ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☐ Male ☒ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

- ☐ Curiosity
- ☐ Independence
- ☒ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Had taken ballet for six years. Recently had grown several inches, which affected her confidence. She differed and left out. Had interest and desire to dance. Diligent in her ballet practice. Took over a role in the performance at the last minute.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

- ☐ Mother
☐ Father
☐ Sibling
☐ Extended family members: (name)

COMMENTS:

Unknown.

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

- ☐ Only
☐ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☒ 1
 ☐ 2
 Total number of children in family
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3

Brother, Tommy.

Behaviors exhibited:

- ☐ Competition among siblings
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☐ Mother
 ☐ Father
 ☐ Siblings
 ☐ Extended family members: (name)

The story plot did not develop family relationships. There was no mention of a father in the home. Tommy's and her mother's interactions were implied as being positive. Stacey felt her mother's dedication and encouragement.

- ☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of
 ☐ Mother
 ☐ Father

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

_____ 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

_____ 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

_____ 1
 X 2
 _____ 3

COMMENTS:

It was mentioned that Stacey had had close friends previous to the story. The time period of the plot was a few weeks. Stacey was an understudy to an older girl, but it was not a close relationships even though it was positive.

Her ballet teacher, Ida May, recognized her talent by selecting her as an understudy and asking her to substitute for Mark after an injury. She provided encouragement and support.

A neighbor, Mrs. Fremple, was a significant influence on Stacey throughout the story. She talked about her spirit and helped her gain her confidence back.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Sachar, Louis. Someday
Angeline. New York: Avon Books, 1983.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Angeline Persopolis Age 8 years

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

- ☒ General intellectual ability
- ☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name)

- ☐ Leadership ability
- ☐ Visual and performing arts: (name)

- ☐ Creative or productive thinking
- ☐ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☐ Male ☒ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

- ☒ Curiosity
- ☒ Independence
- ☐ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

She enjoyed reading and had many interests. She made a deal for her achieving a class officer. She visited the aquarium instead of going to school. She made the decision to move to the 5th grade. She understood the "balance of the whole."

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

- ☐ Mother
☐ Father
☐ Sibling
☐ Extended family members: (name)

COMMENTS:

Unknown.

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

- ☒ Only
☐ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Total number of children in family
 ☒ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3

Behaviors exhibited:

- ☐ Competition among siblings
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☐ Mother
 ☐ Father
 ☐ Siblings
 ☐ Extended family members: (name)

- ☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of

- ☐ Mother
☒ Father

Father didn't feel he could communicate with her. As a garbage collector, he wasn't able to economically provide for her ability.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

_____ 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

 x 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

 x 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

COMMENTS:

Gary was two or three years older than Angeline. They met on the playground and enjoyed similar things. She liked his sense of humor. He was instrumental in making her school situation positive.

Miss Turbone was Gary's teacher. She included Angeline and eventually consulted her father about a transfer to her classroom.

Angeline's father had a close friend, Gus, who also was important to the conclusion of the story.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Sachs, Marilyn. *A Summer's Lease*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1979.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Gloria Age 15 years

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

- ☐ General intellectual ability
- ☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name)

- ☐ Leadership ability
- ☒ Visual and performing arts: (name)
writing
- ☐ Creative or productive thinking
- ☐ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☐ Male ☒ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

- ☐ Curiosity
- ☒ Independence
- ☒ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Gloria had an ambition to be a great writer. She received high grades in everything. Felt she was a genius. Had kept a daily log for the last six years. She wanted to handle her own affairs. Didn't want interference or help from her mother. She wanted to be editor of the literary magazine. She planned to go to college and be a writer.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

- ☐ Mother
☐ Father
☐ Sibling
☐ Extended family members: (name)

COMMENTS:

Unknown.

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

- ☐ Only
☐ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☒ 2
 Total number of children in family
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☒ 3

Behaviors exhibited:

- ☒ Competition among siblings
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☒ Mother
 ☐ Father
 ☒ Siblings
 ☐ Extended family members: (name)
- _____

- ☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of
 ☒ Mother
 ☐ Father

Gloria felt her middle brother was favored by her mother. She recognized his achievement in math, although not described as being gifted in the story. He also had allergies. Mother supported him going to college, but felt Gloria should get a job. The older brother, Joe, fought a great deal with his mother. No conflict was described among the siblings but was implied. Gloria was ashamed of her mother, "poor, ignorant working woman." Mother had difficult providing for the family in general, not merely related to talent. Wanted to give her family more.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

_____ 1
_____ 2
_____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

_____ 1
_____ 2
_____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

 x 1
_____ 2
_____ 3

COMMENTS:

Gloria had no close friends. She was very competitive with her peers and expressed jealousy. During the summer she was placed in a situation with Jerry, but it was not determined to be a friendship.

Mrs. Horne, her English teacher and advisor to the literary magazine, recognized Gloria's talent, encouraged her best work, helped her face her peer relationships, and nurtured her outside of the school setting. She aided in her developing values.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Smith, Alison. Reserved for
Mark Anthony Crowder. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Mark Anthony Crowder Age 6th grader

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

- ☒ General intellectual ability
- ☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name)

- ☐ Leadership ability
- ☐ Visual and performing arts: (name)

- ☐ Creative or productive thinking
- ☐ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☒ Male ☐ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

- ☒ Curiosity
- ☒ Independence
- ☒ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Had always received good grades. Liked reading, had many interests, hobbies and collections. Enjoyed being alone. Tried to solve own problems. Made the garden a success, made an authentic Indian tipi, pursued interests regardless of consequences.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

- ☐ Mother
☐ Father
☐ Sibling
☒ Extended family members: (name)
 Uncle Edward

COMMENTS:

His mother was good at statistics and figures in her work, but was not described as gifted.

Uncle Edward was his mother's uncle and had come to live with them. He had a large and unusual vocabulary and many interests.

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

- ☐ Only
☐ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
 ☒ 1 sister, Georgette.
 _____ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☒ 1 brother, Wellington, in college.
 _____ 2
 Total number of children in family
 _____ 1
 _____ 2
 ☒ 3

Behaviors exhibited:

- ☒ Competition among siblings
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☒ Mother
 ☐ Father
 _____ Siblings
 _____ Extended family members: (name)

Georgette interfered with Mark's collection, thought he was wierd, and teased him when she was with her friends.

Father felt Mark though only of himself, argued about the tipi, and considered Uncle Edward "that old man."

_____ Inadequate feelings on the part of

- ☐ Mother
☒ Father

Father was a coach at the college level. Felt he didn't understand Mark most of the time and that they needed to communicate more after he began to accept Mark for himself.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

 x 1
_____ 2
_____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

_____ 1
_____ 2
_____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

 x 1
_____ 2
_____ 3

COMMENTS:

Mark enjoyed spending time with Earl during school and outside of school. They had similar interests and respected each other.

Uncle Edward was extremely significant to Mark. He encouraged his ability by suggesting he learn five new words daily, supported his interests through his acquaintances with Mr. Eberhardt and a university student, helped Mark's gardening project succeed, and strengthened Mark's discoveries about himself and his feelings about his family.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Smith, Doris Buchanan.
Last Was Lloyd. New York: The Viking Press, 1981.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Lloyd Albert Age 12 years

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

☐ General intellectual ability
☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name)

☐ Leadership ability
☐ Visual and performing arts: (name)

☐ Creative or productive thinking
☒ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☒ Male ☐ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

☐ Curiosity
☒ Independence
☒ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Was insecure, didn't want others to know him or his ability, daydreamed, missed much school, appeared to be a good student, strives for independence, went to park alone, served dinner, required Ancil to be invited to the party. Showed commitment to batting practice.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

COMMENTS:

- ☒ Mother
☐ Father
☐ Sibling
☐ Extended family members: (name)

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

- ☒ Only
☐ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Total number of children in family
 ☒ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3

Behaviors exhibited:

- ☐ Competition among siblings
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☐ Mother
 ☐ Father
 ☐ Siblings
 ☐ Extended family members: (name)

☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of
 ☒ Mother
 ☐ Father

At the time of the story Lloyd and his mother were the only family members. He had had a father and step-fathers in the home. Mother had Lloyd at age fourteen, was very over-protective, did things for him, concerned authorities would take him from her.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

_____ 1
 X 2
 _____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

_____ 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

 X 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

COMMENTS:

In addition to the development of Lloyd's own perception and acceptance of himself, the emerging friendships of Kirby and Ancil were significant. Lloyd wanted to be liked and accepted by others, but was not trusting enough to let others know him. Kirby seeks him out as a friend, and then he does the Ancil.

The school probation officer visits Lloyd at home several times and takes a special interest in him. He helps Lloyd accept the responsibility of attending school and changing his attitudes and behaviors regarding himself and his peers.

GIFTED AND TALENTED MAIN CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION CONTENT ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Wells, Rosemary. *When No One Was Looking*. New York: The Dial Press, 1980.

MAIN CHARACTER

Name of character: Kathy Bardy Age 14 years

Area(s) of demonstrated or potential abilities:

☐ General intellectual ability
☐ Specific academic aptitude: (name)

☐ Leadership ability
☐ Visual and performing arts: (name)

☐ Creative or productive thinking
☒ Psychomotor ability

Sex of character: ☐ Male ☒ Female

Race of character: ☒ White ☐ Nonwhite

Behavioral characteristics:

☐ Curiosity
☐ Independence
☒ Task commitment

COMMENTS:

Kathy had talent for and a tremendous drive for tennis. She had difficulty with algebra. She spent much time practicing tennis, taking lessons, and working at the club to earn money.

FAMILY

Gifted or talented family members:

☒ Mother
☐ Father
☒ Sibling
☐ Extended family members: (name)

COMMENTS:

Her mother had swimming ability.
 Jody, her sister, was intellectually bright.

Birth order of the gifted and talented main character:

☐ Only
☒ Oldest
☐ Number of younger siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☒ 2
☐ Number of older siblings
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
☐ Total number of children in family
 ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☒ 3

Behaviors exhibited:

☒ Competition among siblings
☐ Negative feelings about other family members
 ☐ Mother
 ☒ Father
 ☐ Siblings
 ☐ Extended family members: (name)

Jody was jealous of the family's devotion and dedication to Kathy's tennis. She had to care for their baby brother, spent her weekends at tennis tournaments, and work to help.

The father did not agree with some of the mother's actions regarding goals for Kathy's career. He insisted on her studying and being tutored in algebra.

☐ Inadequate feelings on the part of

☒ Mother
☒ Father

Economics enters into both parents' feelings. Her mother "worries" much of the time. Her father does not stand up to his wife's desires.

FRIENDSHIPS

_____ Number of close friends within peer group

 X 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

_____ Number of friends older than peer group

 X 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

_____ Adult friend outside the immediate family who serves as mentor

 X 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3

COMMENTS:

Julia had been Kathy's friend since first grade. She was from an affluent family. Her mother was accepting of Kathy. Kathy often went to their home when she was disturbed about something. There was a mysterious aspect of their friendships which is revealed, but not completely explained.

Oliver was a freshman at Yale and met Kathy during the summer. They shared similar interests. A boy-girl relationship is implied but not developed.

Her tennis coach, Marty, played the role of a mentor and yet she had personal acclaim at stake through Kathy. She pushed Kathy to succeed and be a competitive winner.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare findings about the personal characteristics of gifted and talented children, their families, and their friendships in research studies with the content in children's fiction books with gifted and talented main characters. The research included how realistically the gifted and talented main characters, their families, and their friendships are portrayed in books for children and young adults.

Fifteen titles of children's fiction books, published in 1975 or later, were analyzed. Each title was listed in a selection bibliography or a journal article directed to the subject of the gifted and talented, and reviewed positively in a current reviewing source. All selected books had a gifted and talented main character.

The areas of demonstrated or potential abilities represented by the main characters included general intellectual ability, visual and performing arts, and psychomotor ability. The behavioral characteristics of curiosity, independence, and task commitment were evident in the main characters of the books analyzed. Most gifted and talented children were portrayed as being only children, older, or oldest children in families, although several different family structures were described.

Competition among siblings, negative feelings about family members, and inadequacy on the part of one or both parents were evident in the books. The presence of a gifted and talented child in the family was not described by all authors as the cause of these behaviors, however.

Most of the gifted and talented main characters in the books were realistically portrayed by authors as having one or two close friends within their peer group, a friend older than the peer group, or an adult

mentor outside the immediate family. Friends were described as being understanding, having similar interests, and giving support.

The books analyzed did not demonstrate that the majority of gifted and talented children were white males. Nine of the gifted and talented main characters in the books were females, with one being from an interracial family. The giftedness of parents was not evident in the majority of the books analyzed. They did not demonstrate that most parents have a similar ability level to that of their children.